

THE SCHLOCK OF THE MILLENNIUM
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says David Mellor
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THE INDEPENDENT

Thursday 26 February 1998 45p No 3,544

US shooting lobby funds countryside march

Exclusive

By Ian Burrell

AMERICA'S shooting and hunting lobby has been bankrolling this weekend's mass march pledged to save the British countryside way of life.

The Duke Of Westminster, Britain's richest man, has also given more than £1m to the organisers of the Countryside March, which is intended to save rural jobs and promote fox-hunting. Other supporters include the chairmen of some of Britain's biggest companies, including Sir Alick Rankin, of General Accident, and Jonny Weatherby of Weatherby's, which runs horseracing.

Sunday's march is expected to attract 250,000 people to London. The organisers have hired 2,000 coaches and 25 trains to bring in supporters and are setting up a one-day radio station, March FM.

The *Independent* has established that much of the money for the £500,000 event is coming from overseas supporters and wealthy landowners and businessmen.

The man who thought up the march and who has master-

mind funding of the campaign to save country sports in Britain is Chicago-born lawyer Eric Bettelheim.

London-based Mr Bettelheim is secretary of the Countryside Business Group (CBG), which was formed two years ago to pay for the fight against the threat to the countryside from animal rights activists and lobby groups.

The 10-strong team set up to run the CBG included Sir Alick Rankin and Mr Weatherby as well as Nick Bannister, a senior executive of ABN Amro investment bank, and Alain Drach, chairman of the in-

ternational gunmaking company Holland & Holland.

The CBG, the British Field Sports Society and the Countryside Movement are the three elements in the Countryside Alliance. The Countryside Movement's accounts show that the Duke of Westminster has given £1.3m to the organisation in the form of an unsecured and interest-free loan. The Duke's office said this week: "He never expected that the money would be given back."

Tonight, beacons will be lit in more than 15 US states in support of the 3,000 beacons being ignited in Britain ahead of

the march. An auction at Sotheby's in New York raised over £100,000 by selling hunting and shooting holidays in Britain to Americans. Among those present were Willem FP de Vogel, a leading New York venture capitalist, and C Martin Wood III, senior vice-president of Flowers, one of the largest bakery companies in America.

On a recent visit to London, Lt-Col Dennis Foster, executive director of the American Master of Foxhounds Association, presented a cheque for the auction proceeds to Lord Mancroft, deputy chairman of the Countryside Alliance, which is

organising this weekend's march.

Yesterday, Lt-Col Foster said that American shooting and hunting organisations had "given a considerable amount of money" to the British countryside campaign. "If you allow a precedent to come about in England it will set the stage for many other things," he said. "This is an enormous injustice. It is about a minority versus a majority and about people not understanding wildlife."

Lord Mancroft confirmed the American gift and said the alliance was "extremely grateful" for the money.

Right to roam, page 4

'Independent' is the top newspaper for photographs



Best for sport: Christopher Shaw in action in the pool, photographed by David Ashdown

The *Independent* was last night named Diageo Newspaper of the Year in the annual British Picture Editors' Awards. The prize was presented to Rosie Boycott, editor of the *Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday*, by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The newspaper also received the award for the best use of black and white photography.

Picture of the Day, page 18



Best for news: John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, photographed by David Rose

Hacker breaks into Pentagon computer

By John Carlin
in Washington

IT COULD have been mischievous teenagers. It could have been a solitary anarchist. It could have been Saddam Hussein, or Hamas, or North Korea, or the Cali Cartel, or any other nation or organisation with a grudge against the US.

The Pentagon's computer system has been under sustained, successful and anonymous cyber attack during the past two weeks. The news has prompted alarm in military circles at the vulnerability of the US in the face of a form of warfare that could be the shape of conflict in the 21st century.

"It was the most organised and systematic attack the Pentagon has seen to date," John Hamre, the deputy secretary of defence, said yesterday. Hackers had penetrated and removed information from

Pentagon computer files nationwide in a succession of "fairly heavy cyber attacks".

"All the services had penetration to some degree," Mr Hamre said, but he stressed that the attackers had failed to access classified data.

He did not believe the attacks had been connected to the Iraqi crisis, but he described them as a "wake-up call" on the vulnerability of sensitive information in both government and corporate computers. The attackers may have penetrated the private sector too, he said.

The FBI and the military have been investigating but so far have no idea of the attackers' identity. Mr Hamre suggested the Pentagon might have fallen victim to a small number of individuals playing a game, but he admitted he did not know whether one person or many had been behind the apparently concerted attacks.

Archers star designs his own death

THERE WAS a distinct whiff of Thomas Hardy about the Archers last night, writes Paul McCann. John Archer had given up his wild ways - by Archers standards - to propose to his loved one Hayley. A happy ending looked in the offing. And then it was John himself who was offed by a tractor.

Being a member of the Archer family itself is usually a safe bet. They are, after all, the franchise, and the last one to go to the green room in the sky was Dan Archer in 1986.

A young soap actor should be able to look forward to years of therapy trying to sort out his

fictional character from his typecast self. Not so now. The Archers' four million listeners demand drama and death at an increasingly frequency.

Sam Berrisford, 23, the actor who played John Archer, at least had the luxury of requesting his own demise. "There have been lots of ominous quotes like 'have you repaired that tractor yet?'" he said yesterday. "But no one has guessed. Even my mum doesn't know yet."

The death scene was recorded on 2 February, since when the scripts were shredded.

Latest victim, page 16

Claws out on the catwalk ...



Be careful with those fingernails: a model at last night's Tristram Webber show for London Fashion Week
Photograph: Peter Macdarmid

Patten quits Murdoch to escape book censorship

Exclusive

By Andrew Buncombe

CHRIS PATTEN, the last governor of Hong Kong, has switched publishers for his forthcoming memoirs to prevent editorial censorship by Rupert Murdoch.

Mr Patten has decided to have his book *East and West* published by Macmillan rather than Mr Murdoch's company HarperCollins.

The move follows a row over Mr Murdoch's attempt to censor criticism of the Chinese authorities contained within the book, which recounts Mr Patten's experiences in the former colony. Yesterday, it was announced that Stuart Proffitt - the senior editor at HarperCollins who had been working on *East and West* - had left the company. His departure comes in the wake of an altercation with senior executives over an instruction to alter the text.

Mr Murdoch has extensive business interests in South-east Asia and in 1994 stopped the BBC - considered by China to be unfriendly - from broadcasting on Star TV, his Far East satellite channel. Mr Patten denounced that move as a "seedy betrayal" of the right to free speech.

The former governor said last night: "I am adamant that my book will be read the way I intended it to be read. It is going to be quite a story."

Editor's departure, page 2



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Today's news

Damon Albarn attacks Labour luvvies
BLUR's Damon Albarn yesterday criticised Labour luvvies who flock to Downing Street bashes. The lead singer of the Britpop band was speaking at a Westminster protest against student tuition fees.
Page 8

Rub-on cholera vaccine
SCIENTISTS today announce the discovery of a needle-free way of giving vaccinations by rubbing liquid from the cholera bug into the skin.
Page 2

Blair firm on lone-parent benefits
TONY BLAIR yesterday slapped down accusations by William Hague in the Commons that Labour is planning a U-turn over lone-parent benefits.
Page 8

Insurance giants in £15bn merger
TWO OF the country's largest insurers, Commercial Union and General Accident, yesterday announced 3,000 job losses as part of a £15bn mega-merger.
Page 20

UN rift over Iraq agreement
FRANCE is expected to resist efforts by Britain and the US to warn to Saddam Hussein that any violation of the memorandum's provisions would result in almost instantaneous retaliation.
Page 14

Schroder on course to challenge Kohl
GERHARD SCHRÖDER, the most popular opposition politician in Germany, was last night close to winning the Social Democrat Party's nomination for Chancellor.
Page 13

INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 • CROSSWORDS, P28 AND EYE P10 • TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 • SPORT, P25-P28 • COMMENT, P18-P19 • LETTERS, P18 • FULL CONTENTS, P2



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TOMORROW



28 pages of film & music

■ From the streets of Paris to Hollywood acclaim, Djimon Hounsou, Spielberg's *Amistad* superstar
■ Lemmy of Motorhead, a nutter or what...
■ Cornershop: from nowhere to No 1

Vaccine that makes jabs obsolete

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

VACCINATIONS of the future could consist of having a liquid rubbed into your skin, rather than the pain of a needle prick - and all because of cholera.

even when it is put on the skin, and that it speeds up immune responses to any other foreign protein added to it.

Tests on laboratory mice have confirmed cholera's effectiveness in helping the body to generate antibodies to diphtheria and tetanus.

US army scientists have discovered that the toxin produced by the cholera bacterium stimulates an immune response

commercially within the next five to 10 years.

"We can take an off-the-shelf vaccine, mix it with cholera toxin and get a very nice immune response from that off-the-shelf, type vaccine," said Dr Gregory Glenn, of the department of biochemistry at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, in Washington DC.

"The implications are that

one could eliminate needles."

The army scientists' work is reported today in the science journal *Nature*.

The method could revolutionise vaccination programmes in developing countries, where the cost of needles for injections can be prohibitive.

The idea of using a potentially dangerous disease to produce medical benefits - the basis of immunisation - is also

being suggested for techniques such as gene therapy.

Some scientists have suggested using a weakened form of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, to carry out gene therapy for genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis.

Because HIV adds its own genetic material to the host, it could act as the carrier for helpful genes - such as those to cure cystic fibrosis. However,

that work is still in its early stages.

Cholera is a more promising candidate for pain-free immunisation. Though widely feared as a disease, its real danger lies in its dehydrating effects.

When consumed (usually through infected water), the bacteria produce a toxin which inflames the gut and leads to diarrhoea and vomiting. The rapid fluid loss can seriously

weaken the body. But if the lost fluids are replaced from uncontaminated sources, the immune system can usually overcome the infection.

In that sense, the cholera toxin is not deadly - instead, the principal risk arises from its side-effects.

Thus it makes an ideal candidate as an "adjuvant" for helping provoke an immune response.



Caught in the middle: Stuart Proffitt, head of HarperCollins, (above) tried to protect the memoirs of Chris Patten (left) from being censored by Harper owner Rupert Murdoch



Minister attacks EU plan on BSE

By Katherine Butler
in Brussels

EU plans to postpone the extension of stringent anti-BSE controls to other parts of Europe, exempting up to eight countries, could put consumers at risk, the Government warned yesterday.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said agriculture minister Jack Cunningham had misgivings about European Commission proposals to delay full implementation of a ban on offal, bone and other risky parts of cows and sheep until January 1999.

Even more worrying as far as Britain is concerned, is that up to eight countries could be officially whitelisted for BSE risk and so exempted fully from the obligation to ban animal parts which pose most danger. Those who apply for exemption will not have to take any new precautions before January.

Seven countries - Britain, Ireland, France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Portugal - face blacklisting as official BSE risk zones under the plan. They will have to start complying with the rules on offal removal by 1 July. Countries which have not had a "native" BSE case stand a good chance of being certified in the "low" or "negligible" risk category.

The proposals, which could cause chaos for consumers, will be widely seen as a huge concession to the Germans. Bonn has always insisted it does not need British slaughtering regulations because it has recorded no indigenous cases and the cost of upgrading German abattoirs would be out of all proportion to the risk.

Publisher who fell prey to Murdoch's Asian powerplay

Stuart Proffitt is thought by many to be one of the last gentlemen in the world of publishing.

Erudite, hardworking, a little professorial perhaps. He was a high-flyer and at HarperCollins, the publishers where he was employed until yesterday, he worked on many high-profile publications, including the autobiography of Margaret Thatcher. It was natural he would be working on a title such as *East and West*, the memoirs of Chris Patten as the last Governor of Hong Kong.

Some might mistake his

Patten book row shows tycoon's Eastern promise, reports Andrew Buncombe

careful, precise manner for those of a prima donna, but those who know Mr Proffitt say he has one characteristic above all others: he is principled.

Yesterday staff at HarperCollins, the publishing house owned by Rupert Murdoch, were informed that Mr Proffitt was no longer employed by the company. The termination of his employment was "with immediate effect".

Mr Proffitt was last night not available for comment but it is

understood his departure is linked to his efforts to defend his much-valued principles.

It was reported earlier this week that senior executives had instructed Mr Proffitt to alter sections of the book - or have Mr Patten rewrite those sections - watering down criticism of the Chinese authorities. It was reported that the senior executives were in turn given their orders by their boss, Mr Murdoch.

Mr Proffitt reacted furiously to this attempt to censor one of

his authors. The row resulted in Mr Proffitt's suspension and for the last two weeks his legal representatives have been in discussion with HarperCollins.

"They have clearly not been able to reach an agreement and now he has gone," said a source at the company. It is not known whether he was sacked or he resigned. Last night no one at HarperCollins was available for comment.

And there the story might end. Except that Mr Proffitt's

departure underlines what is considered by observers to be an ongoing struggle by Mr Murdoch to placate the Chinese authorities.

In 1994 he stopped the BBC, considered to be antagonistic towards Peking, from broadcasting on his Star TV satellite channel, a move strongly criticised by Mr Patten. Mr Murdoch even started broadcasting more Chinese language programmes and set up a Chinese music channel. In 1994, Basic

Books, a division of HarperCollins, published a sugary biography of Deng Xiaoping by his youngest daughter. Murdoch staged a huge promotional effort for the book. He said that Star TV might one day "be a bonanza".

Mr Patten, who has had more experience of the Chinese authorities than most, claims he is more interested in having his own, non-censored words published - than making a bonanza. He said: "I am adamant that my book will be read as I intended it to be read. It is going to be quite a story."

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Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

THE INDEPENDENT

CVCP Higher Education Conferences

Lifelong Learning

The Role for Universities

Thursday 5 March 1998 • Central London

The Government is due to publish a series of White Papers on Lifelong Learning in early 1998, from the DfEE, Scottish and Welsh Offices. This one day CVCP conference will explore the role for universities in developing and implementing the Government's proposals. Universities already play a significant role in lifelong learning, providing courses at all levels - HND, undergraduate, PhD and CPD. How will the developments announced in the White Papers affect this role? In particular what changes will be needed in universities' management, access, curriculum and funding? How can higher education generally develop its interface and partnership with further education to deliver the flexible learning opportunities that lifelong learning demands?

The conference is for senior managers in higher and further education, academics, careers advisers and training and personnel officers in business and funding organisations.

Speakers include

Baroness Blackstone, Minister for Education and Employment
Diana Warwick, Chief Executive, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
Professor Bob Fryer, Principal, Northern College (Lifelong Learning Advisory Group)
Dr Geraldine Kenney-Wallace, MD and VC, British Aerospace Virtual University

Delegate Fees

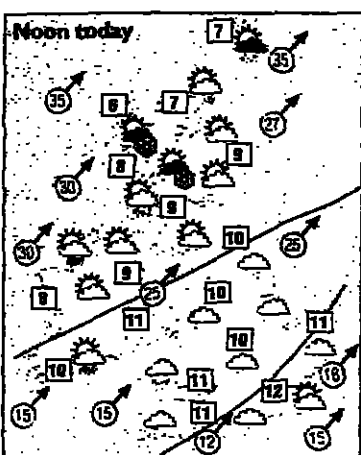
Full Rate: Commercial, Central Government £240+VAT (€400) Total £282.00
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WEATHER



British Isles weather most recent available
Figure of noon local time
Colours: Clear F: Fair; P: Partly; C: Cloudy; M: Mist; R: Rain; S: Snow; Sh: Showers; T: Thunder

Aberdeen	F 11 52	Glasgow	C 10 50
Aberystwyth	C 10 50	Inverness	C 10 50
Ayr	C 9 48	Leicester	C 10 50
Belfast	C 10 50	1st of Solty	C 9 48
Birmingham	C 10 50	Jersey	F 10 50
Bournemouth	C 9 48	Liverpool	C 9 48
Brighton	F 11 52	London	F 12 54
Bristol	C 11 52	Manchester	C 10 50
Cardiff	C 9 48	Newcastle	F 10 50
Canterbury	C 9 48	Oxford	C 10 50
Cardiff	C 9 48	Plymouth	F 11 52
Donner	C 9 48	Scarborough	C 10 50
Dublin	C 9 48	Southampton	F 13 55
Edinburgh	C 9 48	Sheffield	C 10 50
Exeter	F 11 52	Stoke-on-Trent	Sh 8 45
Glasgow	C 9 48	York	C 10 50

Air quality

Healthwatch's readings

London	Mod	Gd
Mod	Mod	Gd
Wales	Gd	Gd
C. England	Mod	Gd
N. England	Mod	Gd
Scotland	Gd	Gd
N. Ireland	Gd	Gd

Outlook for the next few days

London	Mod	Gd
S. England	Gd	Gd
Wales	Gd	Gd
C. England	Gd	Gd
N. England	Gd	Gd
Scotland	Gd	Gd
N. Ireland	Gd	Gd

Sun & moon

Sun 26 Feb	06 53	Sun 12 Mar	11 35
Moon 26 Feb	06 42	Moon 12 Mar	17 30
New Moon	Today		



WILLIAM
HIRSTON
WEATHER
WISE

IF THE forecasters are right - which they are more than 75 per cent of the time - the spring in our weather is about to lose all its bounce. An Arctic blast from Greenland, they say, is going to bring about a drop in temperature of as much as 10 degrees over the next couple of days, bringing snow and sleet to much of the country.

Under such conditions, anyone with a scientific approach to life will head immediately to the formulae for calculating wind-chill factor, for wind-chill

is what makes you feel colder than it really is.

In still, cold air, the human body will heat the air around it creating a sort of duvet of warm air that insulates us. If we don't move, or if we wear heavy clothing to trap it, this duvet will greatly slow down the chilling effect of the cold air on our bodies. In windy conditions, however, our duvet is constantly being blown away and we lose energy (so get cold) through the constant need to create new duvets by warming the air with

which we come into contact.

So the first thing to do when you go out in the cold is to decide which of the various formulae to use for calculating the wind-chill. There are two principal ones on offer. The simpler is: $H = (0.14 + 0.47 \sqrt{v})(36.5 - T)$ where H is the calories lost per second by each square centimetre of exposed skin, v is the wind speed in metres per second and T is the temperature in degrees Celsius. The final term, $36.5 - T$ represents the difference in temperature between the air

(T) and dry skin (36.5).

If you are fussy, or have clammy hands, you may prefer the alternative formula:

$$H = (10.45 + 10 \sqrt{v-v_0})(33 - T)$$

Both formulae appear to have been the result of experiments in the Antarctic with human beings in windswept tents. Since neither takes into account the relative humidity of the air, or the sweatiness of the human, the three-significant-figures accuracy of them is largely spurious.

For all practical purposes, a good enough guide to wind chill is obtained by subtracting one from the temperature in degrees Celsius, then taking away the wind speed in metres per second.

Christian Aid yesterday launched a special El Niño relief appeal to raise £500,000 to enable workers already engaged in relief operations particularly in Peru, Papua New Guinea and Somalia, to expand their efforts to the effects of drought and flooding. For details, phone 0345-000333.

هَذَا مِنَ الْأَصْلِ

Co-ordinated pair with the finest taste in decoration

IN THE NEWS

LORD AND LADY IRVINE

"If thought appropriate, Lady Irvine would be happy to assist," Lord Irvine of Lairg wrote in a letter to Black Rod on 1 July last year.

He was referring to prospective tours of his newly renovated residence at which those with "a bona fide interest in historic buildings and art" would have an opportunity to look at the more than 100 works of art which he plans to borrow from the nation's galleries.

And Lady Irvine would apparently be happy to act as tour guide, something for which she is highly qualified, as the Lord Chancellor himself pointed out: "She is an MA in the

actually approved the lavish £650,000 redecoration of his Westminster apartments. The new fixtures and fittings are famously to include handmade wallpaper at £300 a roll, silk curtains at £20,000 and a £3,000 Pugin-style lavatory which critics have dubbed "Lord Irvine's Throne". Such is the level of media interest in the renovations that a 24-hour security guard has now been placed on the apartments. This follows a complaint from one of the contractors that a journalist offered him a bribe to gain access.

"Lady Irvine and I have had a lifetime's interest in fine art," Lord Irvine wrote in his letter, and there is general agreement that his wife would have influenced his choice of artworks. And why not? Home-makers everywhere will be familiar with such a scenario, although perhaps not on such a grand scale. ("I know you like the Augustus John, darling, but I really do prefer the Landseer." "But darling, we've already got three Landseers. What about a Piranesi?")

The couple are known to fit their European holidays round the major art exhibitions and are keen collectors. "I envy the Medicis their taste and the sensible use of their great wealth in accumulating these treasures," Lord Irvine told *The Independent* last April. His own great wealth, earned as one of London's most successful commercial QCs, has been put to use buying the impressive collections to be found at the Irvine home in West Hampstead and their rural retreat in Argyllshire. Paintings by Sickert, Stanley Spencer, Sir Matthew Smith and Paul Nash adorn the walls, as well as a considerable number of works by Scottish artists. One dealer has commented that the couple "always drive a hard bargain". Lady Irvine is said to sell many of the paintings they acquire, constantly refining the collection. As well as her MA, which she took as a mature student 10 years ago, she has a degree in art from Glasgow University. The couple make "a fantastic team", according to an art-dealer friend. "He is very intuitive, the way he assesses pictures. Alison is both intuitive and trained. But he always buys within his means."

MR AND MRS

Lady Irvine is of course the former Mrs Donald Dewar and left her husband in the early Seventies for the then up-and-coming lawyer Derry Irvine. What is less well known is that Irvine himself was also married at the time their affair began. He had married Margaret Veitch in 1962 when he was 22 and she was 23. In 1970, when Irvine stood as a Labour candidate at Hendon North, it was Margaret who appeared at his side. When she divorced her husband in 1974, the co-respondent was Alison Dewar. It has been said that Irvine and Dewar didn't speak to each other again until 1994, when both were pallbearers at the funeral of John Smith. Irvine, however, has said that the two of them maintained a cordial relationship, especially as the two Dewar children were raised in his home. "Donald and I have met over the years on many occasions and had conversations perfectly harmoniously in the interests of the children," he said last year.

History of Art from the Courtauld Institute in London.

The Black Rod Letter, as we might call it, emerged yesterday and provided yet another new twist in the long-running farce entitled *The Refurbishment of the Lord Chancellor's Residence*. It was proof that Lord Irvine had in fact approached museum and gallery curators with a view to borrowing their works of art more than a month before the House of Lords had

Tim Hulse



Brush with fame: The art-loving Lord and Lady Irvine, known to drive a hard bargain Photograph: Mark Runnacles

WHO WAS PUGIN?

The name of Pugin has become inextricably linked with that of Lord Irvine. Pugin was the architect who oversaw the rebuilding of the Palace of Westminster after a fire in the mid-19th century and the Lord Chancellor's apartments are being restored in his original style. Born in 1812, Pugin equated good design with high moral standards and led a campaign for the Gothic style, which he considered to be an expression of a just and Christian society in contrast to the social ills of 19th-century industrialism. He was mainly responsible for the Victorian Gothic Revival and was a considerable influence on John Ruskin.

THE MAN LEFT BEHIND

"He has never got over losing his children, it was a terrible blow," a close friend says of Donald Dewar, who was left behind in Glasgow with only his books for company when his wife took their two children and went off with the then Derry Irvine in the early Seventies. Dewar has never remarried and is generally regarded as something of a lonely figure. He never goes on holiday. "If you haven't got anyone to go on holiday with, what's the point in going?" he said recently, somewhat poignantly. He has been known to refuse dinner invitations on Christmas Day, preferring to stay at home with a good book and a plate of fish fingers. Such behaviour tends to bring out a mothering instinct in women. "They worry about him eating properly and remembering to get his hair cut," says a female friend.

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THE FIRST WIFE

Margaret Irvine moved to Canada in 1976. She lives alone in a hamlet 40 miles from Toronto, where she teaches children with special educational needs. Still bitter about the break-up of her marriage, she said recently, "I haven't spoken to my ex-husband since I left Britain. I've cut all that out of my life. I had to put him behind me. After the way he behaved, I wouldn't want to stay in touch with him. It still upsets me."

SOME FASCINATING FACTS

Lord Irvine is the Government's top earner, with a salary of £142,508, which is £40,000 more than Tony Blair. Twenty years ago, he became the country's youngest QC at the age of 37.

Waterstone wins his books empire back

By Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

THE MAN who revolutionised Britain's book stores was back in charge of his Waterstone's chain yesterday after a long-forecast three-way £500m deal also put Dillons and HMV record shops into his control.

Tim Waterstone, who started book selling with a £10,000 loan from his father-in-law, has formed a joint venture with electronics and leisure giant EMI and bought his old Waterstone's chain back from WH Smith. He sold 31 Waterstone's stores in 1989 for £42m - a deal which netted him a £9m profit.

As chairman of the new company, HMV Media, he will now control 106 Waterstone's shops which last year made a £20m profit on a £200m turnover. He will also try to apply his touch to the HMV music stores and Dillons book shops which come with the EMI part of the deal.

Electronics and recording giant EMI has been trying to pull out of retailing for some time to concentrate on the recording in-



Waterstone: Back in charge

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

dustry. It has now effectively ceded control to Waterstone and his private company, Advent.

The new company will compete with WH Smith as one of the country's biggest book and record retailers. The irony is that so much of Mr Waterstone's career has been intertwined with the WH Smith empire. He joined WH Smith in 1973 and was fired in 1981 after he set up an American operation that lost money. When

he left his boss told him: "I suppose we'd prefer it if you didn't open a chain of book shops."

In fact, he used his redundancy money to open book shops that were much bigger than any seen in Britain before. They had a spacious feel that encouraged customers to linger and come back. His was one of the archetypal Eighties entrepreneurial success stories, but unlike the founders of Next and the Sock Shop the bubble did

not burst and he sold a heavily indebted chain to WH Smith just before interest rates rose.

Last year, he founded a children's store, the Daisy and Tom children's shop in Kensington, west London, which he plans to float on the stock market. In keeping with the book shops, the children's venture is named after his three-year-old daughter and his business partner's son.

In a fiendishly complex deal, EMI bought Waterstone's from WH Smith for £300m then sold it, its 78 Dillons stores and 271 HMV stores to the joint venture it created with Tim Waterstone for £500m. The City welcomed the deal by marking up EMI shares by 15p and WH Smith shares by 5p after the news broke. EMI said there would only be a small number of book shop closures because of the merger; regulatory approval will be needed for the deal to go through.

The Dillons stores that form the deal are likely to be re-branded as Waterstone's and the whole company will be floated on the stock exchange in a few years.

"Rival bid" for Waterstones page 20

Aggrieved City bankers tell all on net

By Lea Paterson

DISGRUNTLED City bankers have found a new way to complain about the size of their pay cheques. Rather than confide in a colleague or drown their sorrows with a glass of champagne or two, City folk can now open their hearts to the Internet.

Two entrepreneurs from North London have set up a website aimed specifically at London's highly paid banking community. The major draw of the site is a bulletin board where bankers can anonymously post their views about life, the universe, and the most important of all, their bonuses. The site provides a fascinating insight into the surreal world of investment banking.

Take yesterday's top item, "Warburg's insulting bonuses". This detailed City fury at the "herisry" level of bonus paid by SBC

Warburg, a leading investment bank. The bank told staff this week that some payouts would be lower than normal after last year's turmoil in South-East Asia. Many staff will receive bonuses of "only" a couple of thousand of pounds, which prompted bankers to flood the website with complaints.

"There was initially disbelief, followed by anger, and, finally a feeling of having been shabbily treated", say contributors to the website. "Until yesterday I was having sleepless nights trying to decide whether I would buy a BMW Z3 or a Porsche Boxter with my bonus. Now I'm off out to buy a mountain bike", complained one Warburg employee. "Might as well work at McDonald's", added another. Yet another banker advocated direct action: "Banks are trying to break the high-paying culture in the industry and this is just the start. The

only way to counter it is to show Warburgs how destructive it is by large numbers of us leaving as soon as the bonuses are paid".

The site is not only used by bankers peeved by the size of their pay cheques. It has also provided comfort to employees at UBS, a top City bank, which recently announced it was going to make hundreds, if not thousands, of staff redundant following a merger with SBC Warburg. The bulletin board is plastered with comments from UBS staff who are concerned about their future, concerned about their pay, or just plain fed up. "If I go and look for a new job now, my bonus will be effectively cancelled", complained one member of staff. "I think those of us coming from the old UBS are going to be less well-paid than our counterparts at Warburgs", moaned another.

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Allow right to roam or else, landowners told

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

EVERYONE will gain the right to roam over the open countryside of England and Wales, the Government said yesterday. If rural landowners do not come up with credible proposals to allow access to ramblers, then ministers will introduce legislation to compel them.

A long-awaited consultation paper says the right to roam will cover nearly 5,000 square miles of mountain, moor, heath, down and open commons - about a tenth of the land area of England and Wales.

The Government has given the National Farmers' Union, the Country Landowners' Association and the Moorland Association a three-month consultation period in which to come up with voluntary proposals for opening up their estates to the public with a network of new paths and free-to-roam areas.

It will then weigh these plans up, and if what is on offer does not go far enough, then new access laws would be drawn up, said Environment Minister

Michael Meacher. "Our objectives are non-negotiable," he told a press conference. The major landowner organisations would have to give guarantees on the quantity, quality and permanence of the new access they were allowing to ramblers. They would not be paid any compensation, although there might be some funding for car parks and marking paths.

But Mr Meacher insisted he wanted people to be able to wander freely across open landscapes, even if most people preferred staying on a footpath. "The countryside is wonderfully refreshing and reviving to the spirit," he said. In a small, crowded island "people do have a right to enjoy the wonderful legacy of our countryside, provided they do so responsibly."

The document does not cover Scotland, which has different trespass and access laws and where there is a traditional right to roam - although ramblers fear it is being eroded.

People south of the border will not be given the right to roam through crop fields, woods and enclosed grazing meadows. The Government has

also not yet decided whether they will be allowed to take their dogs with them.

Yesterday, Mr Meacher was doubtful on whether any voluntary agreement could be adequate. He said he had visited Rammore Common near Dorking, Surrey, at the weekend where a landowner had recently revoked a right to roam which dated back to 1929. Warning notices have gone up.

"That's a challenge for those groups arguing for the voluntary way," he said. He questioned how the Country Landowners' Association could ensure all its members complied with any agreement.

But the Association was delighted with yesterday's document. "We're really glad they included the voluntary option, and we're confident our members can deliver," said spokeswoman Anne Marshall.

Kate Ashbrook, chair of the 122,000 member Ramblers' Association, was also encouraged but said legislation to enforce the right to roam was essential.

"The landowners are bound to say they can deliver voluntarily; we're quite clear that they can't."



Sign of the times: Stephen Goodwin crossing the moors on the Duke of Westminster's Abbeystead Estate in Lancashire

Photograph: Tom Pilston

How I trespassed on the duke's forbidden moors

By Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

ROTTEN HILL and Johnny Pye's Clough Top are wind-blown features on a vast tract of heather moorland one of the richest in Britain wants to keep strictly private.

They are not the most shapely of hills and it is hardly likely that ramblers' boots will erode scars across them even if

a "right to roam" is granted. Yet the fell tops beckoned.

As the Government was unveiling its cautious approach to achieving public access to some four million acres, *The Independent* was advance testing the right to roam in the Forest of Bowland in Lancashire. Despite its name, this is open moorland, home of grouse and birds of prey.

We chose Bowland, and specifically the Abbeystead Es-

tate of the Duke of Westminster, because it has been a classic example of "forbidden Britain" for decades. Tom Stephenson, the father of the Pennine Way who died 10 years ago, spent most of his life angry about the denial of access in Bowland.

No bailiffs appeared as we walked the moors. We reached Grizedale Head and descended to Abbeystead on a private track beautifully maintained for the

comfort of grouse shooting parties. Then we sampled the south side of the estate, following a vehicle track before crossing the moor towards Johnny Pye's.

Intimidation rather than confrontation seems to be the way of Gerald Cavendish Grosvenor, the sixth duke. I know of no part of upland Britain where the "Private" signs are so thick on the ground. The 46-year old duke has

bankrolled the Countryside Movement, set up to defend hunting and country sports and to oppose a right to roam, to the tune of £1.3m. The public has gained a foothold on the estate: the duke's predecessor allowed an access strip along the highest ridge over Clougha Pike and Ward's Stone and this duke has added a little more. But at least 90 per cent of the estate remains barred.

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M15 has stopped spying on political groups, says Straw

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

M15 HAS reduced its activities against subversive political groups to a mere "monitoring" operation since the end of the Cold War, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said yesterday.

Mr Straw also promised more openness about the security services, and an announcement before the summer on how they might be opened up to greater public scrutiny.

In a Commons debate, he also said he would never allow a minister or MP to demand a file on him be destroyed. There had been reports that Peter Mandelson, the Minister Without Portfolio, wanted records of his activities in the Young Communist League removed from the archives.

Mr Straw also suggested that security vetting of ministers would not have led to disclosure of old information from the Cold War period because it would no longer be "live" and would not routinely be consulted. A file was held on him when he was president of the National Union of Students between 1969 and 1971, and on the Social Security Secretary Harriet Harman when she worked for the National Council for Civil Liberties in the 1980s.

Responding to questions from Julian Lewis, the Conservative MP for New Forest East, Mr Straw said the security services had a duty to "protect na-

tional security from actions intended to overthrow or undermine democracy by political, industrial or violent means."

"Our Parliamentary democracy is not currently threatened by the activities of subversive groups. That was not always the case, and it was particularly not the case during the Cold War."

"The limited resources which the service actually devotes to counter subversion are focused on monitoring so it would be able to respond if a threat should emerge," he said.

Although the nature of the security services' work required protection from "the full glare of publicity," he planned to look at ways of opening them up a little. For example, MPs might be told how many files on individuals were currently "live."

Since 1992, files no longer needed had been destroyed as resources allowed. This process had been speeded up recently but there was no question of allowing ministers to ask for their files to be shredded. "It would be very wrong to do so in respect of private individuals, it would be even more wrong to do so at the behest of honourable or right honourable members and particularly for ministers," he said.

Mr Lewis had complained that the destruction of files might deprive historians of material, for example relating to Nazi sympathiser groups in Britain around the time of the Second World War.

Two hurt in bomb blast

TWO postal workers were injured yesterday when a letter-bomb exploded in Belfast's main Royal Mail sorting office.

Another two were treated for shock after a package went off in the returned mail department in the Tomb Street premises half a mile from the city centre.

The two injured men were not believed to have been seriously hurt by what police called a small explosion. One took the main force of the blast as he handled it. He was injured in the chest and arm.

Estate sues

A multi-million pound action for damages is to be launched over the death of Chelsea Football Club's vice-chairman, Matthew Harding, in a helicopter crash.

The civil action for compensation was announced within minutes of an inquest jury returning a verdict of accidental death on Mr Harding, 42, and four other men who died in the when the helicopter crashed on farmland in Cheshire.

David Cooper, a lawyer who represents Mr Harding's estate, said that claims would be made against a number of unnamed parties.

Royal return

PRINCESS Margaret was due to arrive home today from Barbados where she has been having tests after suffering a stroke on Monday.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said the Princess was continuing to make "steady progress" following the mild stroke which struck while she was holidaying with friends on the vacation island of Mustique.

Radio waves

THE man who revamped Radio 1 by sacking old DJs and first bringing in and then losing Chris Evans is giving up day-to-day control of the station. Matthew Bannister remains in overall control of the BBC's national radio stations, but his Radio 1 deputy, Andy Parfitt, is to become controller of the network.

Homes soar

THE strength of the housing market in 1997 was revealed in figures from the Land Registry which showed that prices in the autumn 9 nine per cent up on 1996.

Forget the MCC: the women's clubs that really are exclusive

By Kate Watson-Smyth

IT WAS a decision that surprised no one – least of all the women. For the second time in its 211-year history, the Marylebone Cricket Club has voted to exclude them.

Despite the fact that members voted in favour of changing the rule, the 55.7 per cent vote fell short of the two-thirds majority required and the ban will stay – at least for the time being.

But do women care? The number of organisations for them has mushroomed in recent years and women in almost every field can join their own exclusive clubs.

They can do their own networking without having to feel excluded from whispered conversations over a glass of port in the old boys' club and most are agreed that they have no desire to join a group of men in a fusty oak-panelled room for idle conversation.

Linda Christmas, deputy chair of Women in Journalism, said women in many professions had felt the need to set up their own clubs to combat inequality in the workplace but once the organisation was up and running, women were much better at achieving their aims than men.

"The perception of men's clubs is rather

stolid and women's tend to be younger and more vibrant," she said.

"It can be very frustrating to keep banging your head against the wall trying to get anywhere in the old boys' club and ultimately it is a waste of energy."

"But when women get together they are much more efficient than men who tend to sit and talk about things and then expect some mythical person to go and do it all."

"In a women's club they will decide what they want to achieve and go out and do it. Women are far more inclusive."

This is a view echoed by the Secretary of the University Women's Club, who is a man.

John Rubson, who has run the club for almost five years but is not a member and has no rights, said women were much more friendly.

"Years ago I ran a men's club and it was very different," he said.

"The members here are much more friendly and approachable."

"There is also a lot more going on than in the average men's club where they might have one game of backgammon a year and spend the rest of the time fermenting in the bar. There is no doubt that women are more purposeful."



Exclusive retreat: Elizabeth Parsons, a former chairwoman, relaxing at the University Women's Club in Mayfair, central London

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

"Although our club is a retreat and we like members to think of it as their London home, we also organise events and the committee is working to encourage young people in music and painting."

"But they use the club to network as well as to relax."

Jo Darbyshire, president of the Sorop-

timists, a philanthropic organisation for professional women, said the organisation was used not only to network but also for social occasions.

"Our members meet twice a month and there is a lot of networking but I feel it is much purer than when a group of men get together in a club," she said.

"Women are much more capable of sup-

porting each other than men and I think they work together for the good of everyone and not just for personal advantage."

But Ylva French, the managing director of Women in Communications, which operates as an umbrella organisation for several women's clubs, said it was proof of the continuing inequality that such organ-

isations were needed. "There is still a need for solidarity among women and that is why there are so many clubs," she said.

"They were set up as a reaction against the number of men's clubs but also because women wanted to achieve something while having a good time and the men just want to have a good time."

How employers can help mothers

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

WOMEN say they would be more likely to take up full-time work if employers paid for part of their childcare costs, according to a new MORI poll due to be published today.

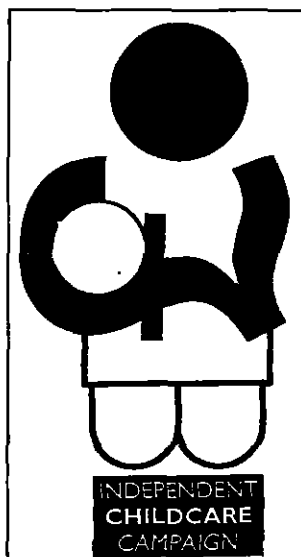
Almost half of women polled but particularly young women from low income families said they would be encouraged to swap part-time for full-time work if they were given help.

The poll conducted for the Kids' Club Network and Childcare Vouchers Ltd (CCV) also said that the main benefits to employers would be lower absenteeism and increased loyalty to their work.

Last week, *The Independent* launched its campaign for tax allowances for working women urging the Chancellor to invest in the future by making quality childcare more affordable.

The MORI poll of 445 women found that at the moment relatives or friends are the main providers of both out-of-school care and childcare during working hours. Childminders are used predominantly by professional full-time workers in the south of England. Around one in ten women use nurseries, while a tiny minority (4 per cent) have access to after-school clubs.

Only a quarter of working women have taken annual leave to be at home or go on holiday



with children during school holidays and one in seven pay childminders during the holidays.

Nearly a third of women said that they would have increased loyalty towards their employees if they were given help – with the feeling being greatest among full-time middle-class working women with high incomes. One in ten women said that help would attract and retain high-calibre female staff.

Today, the CCV and Kids' Club Network will launch a voucher scheme, an initiative which enables employers to contribute directly to working parents' out-of-school childcare and holiday childcare costs. The "School's Out Voucher" aims to cover around 50 per cent of av-

erage costs. The employer would pass the voucher on to their employee who would be able to redeem it at a KCCN club.

The launch will be attended by Alan Howarth, the minister with responsibility for co-ordinating the Government's national childcare strategy.

"The MORI/CCV research shows the Government's commitment to increase the number of out of school places is on the right track," said Sue Harvey, managing director of CCV. "Importantly it also highlights the fact that those families most likely to benefit from the extra places – families who are unable to pay childminders or nannies – will not be able to take them up as they cannot afford the costs, and rely on the generosity of relatives and friends."

Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology at University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, said: "With two out of every three families now working, families' affordable childcare provision is an absolute necessity to avoid the stresses and strains of balancing the home/work dilemma."

"During school time the problems are minimised but the real pressures occur in the periods before and after school and in particular during the school holidays. This type of scheme is an absolute necessity not only for the increasing number of working families but also for the overall success of UK plc."

Supporters rally to the cause

HUNDREDS of people have contacted *The Independent* to lend their support to the campaign. They include:

Helen Wilkinson, Demos; Sheila Kitzinger, Women's Employment, Enterprise & Training Unit, Norwich; Kamlesh Bahl, Equal Opportunities Commission; Sibhi magazine; The Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association; John McLaughlin, Northolt; Alison Purver, Leeds; David and Liz Copeman; Mina Blythe, Bristol; Melissa Slater; Dr Joanna F. Uchegbu, University of Strathclyde; St Albans; Kate Holden; Penelope Overton; St Albans; Magdalena Ietswaart, Aberdeen; Andrew Smith, Secretary, Scottish Young Liberal Democrats.

Kate Moore; Kate Royce, senior librarian, Guildhall School of Music and Drama; Fiona Tillington; Lindsey Uwins; Ani Devika; Sally Wilson; Graham Giles; C Euan Dunbar; Amanda Jones, conference producer JBC UK; Conferences Ltd; Adrian Preston; London; Tessa Younger; Maria Ziv; Garcia Pastor; Julie Schwartz; Zee Cull Garland International; Ali Hannan; Jo Denbury; Debi Angel; Elie Decoe; Fiona Rintoul; London; Sheila Candeland; Manchester Metropolitan University; Julia Burrill; Rodger; Jane McCann; Julie Brennan; University Library Scotland; Rachel O'Neill, PR manager AOL UK; Clare Hall; Jayne Wright; Jane E. Riley; Valery R. Cowan; Dunfermline;



Kamlesh Bahl, of the Equal Opportunities Commission

Liz Seward; Sarah and Mark Butt; Andrew McNamara; Adrian and Sharon Magnus; Miri Rubin, lecturer Oxford University.

Charlotte Worker, Kent; Clare McGlynn, Newcastle; Nikki Chapple; Alison Walters, London; Audrey Reimann; Jayne Roscoe; West Sussex; Ylva Player-Dahms; Nigel Platt, Surrey; Brown Pitt; Jacques Hampton; Susan Antal, London; Deborah Zaba, mermans; V R Burton; Deborah Zaba, Bristol; Kate McFarlan; Helen Moore; Doreen Boddy;

College, Cambridge (retired senior member); Elizabeth Adams; Jo Blakey; K Ridealgh; Jan and Bob Metcalfe, Romford; Erika Watson, co-ordinator Aliant; Sterling; Elaine Nielsen; E Hall; Helen McGhee.

Jimie and Amanda Moore; Andrea Bradley; Milton Keynes; Dr Anna Wilson, chairman Royal College of General Practitioners, Wessex Faculty; Rachel White, Leamington Spa; Alicia Carroll, London; S Peter, Leamington Spa; Maureen Sterling, Kidderminster; H English, Twickenham; Lord Russell; M F Sayrell, Bournemouth; G & B Lilley, Stoke-on-Trent; Carolyn Dobson, Malvern; Carol Watkins, Yeovil; Karen Wilde, London.

Jane Bryson, Northumberland; Julie Hawkins, Basingstoke; J Gregory, Birmingham; Christina Redmond, London; Harriet Kimbell, Guildford; Wendy Dunthie, Hayle; Allegra Valentine, London; Ann M Jackson, Neil Jackson, Sheffield; Carol Holmes, Leeds.

Dr Joan Draper, Coventry; Sally N Mills, Haywards Heath; Sarah Jenkins, Bristol; Anne Longfield, Kids' Club Network; Pre-School Learning Alliance; Sarah Aslan, London; Gillian Ward, Surrey; Emma Thorpe, Surrey; E E de Martos, Tonbridge; Julia Williams, Surrey; Catherine A Hobson, Canterbury; Linda Hancock, Sevenoaks; F Husselbury, Cheshire; Hyacinth Morris; Debbie Boone, Nottingham; Yvonne Stevens; Ann Thwaite, Norfolk; Tracey Kiernan.

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Aldermaston link to child cancer

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

UNUSUALLY high numbers of childhood leukaemia cases near nuclear establishments such as Harwell and the Aldermaston weapons base in Berkshire could be caused by radioactive dust particles in the air, an independent scientist has suggested.

This would account for the anomaly between the apparently high numbers of the cancer, and data from monitors, which suggest that radiation levels for the area are below the national average.

Dr Chris Busby, acting for the European Committee on Radiation Risk, says in a new paper submitted to medical journals that a detailed analysis of incidences of leukaemia cases within the Newbury ward of Berkshire suggests that plutonium particles could be suspended in the air by electrostatic action.

The suggestion comes as the De-

partment of Health is finalising an urgent investigation, due to be published next month, investigating radioactivity levels in the Newbury area. The independent Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (Comare) carried out a study for the department after claims of leukaemia clusters there.

The worries in the area first surfaced 10 years ago when a local doctor's study of leukaemia incidence showed that the only common factor was proximity to the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment.

Since then they have been fuelled by repeated claims that there was a nuclear accident at the Greenham Common airbase more than 35 years ago, and that AWE Aldermaston and the Royal Ordnance factory in Burghfield have continually released both liquid and gaseous radioactive pollutants into the atmosphere.

Because radioactive plutonium particles tend to become negatively

charged, because they throw off positively-charged particles as they decay, they would be repelled from the ground (which is largely negatively-charged) and driven into the air, which generally has a positive charge, suggests Dr Busby. Such particles might also be repelled from monitoring equipment, as it would be earthed.

However, people could still breathe in the particles, which would then lead to them receiving comparatively high internal doses. Such internal radiation doses are believed to lead to leukaemia in offspring.

Dr Busby says that mortality data since 1971 shows that seven key wards near AWE Aldermaston have had 50 per cent more cases of leukaemia - 16 instead of 9 - than national statistics would suggest. However, other scientists have disputed this. The National Radiological Protection Board declined to comment specifically on Dr Busby's work ahead of the publication of Comare's work.



Photograph: Nigel Bennett

Headhunted: Sarah Grunewald, the City high-flier at the centre of controversy, with her son Max

Superwoman quits - and takes her men with her

By Louise Jury

An Oxford contemporary of City superwoman Nicola Horlick has become the latest woman to cause a headhunting scandal.

Sarah Grunewald, who is possibly the only woman heading a corporate finance team outside London, was ordered to clear her desk at NatWest Markets last Friday when she announced she was quitting to join rivals Arthur Andersen.

The decision by Mrs Grunewald and her four-man team - who in traditional high finance fashion are going with her - meant NatWest Markets was forced to close its Leeds office and look after its clients from Manchester.

Mrs Grunewald began her career in corporate finance 14 years ago and despite taking time off to have three children, aged one to five, is now reported to earn in the £100,000-a-year bracket. She more than doubled her number of clients during her time at NatWest and took over as director of corporate finance 16 months ago.

She is now sitting out her contract at home before starting her new job at the end of March, and was refusing to comment yesterday. But, earlier, she told the *Daily Mail*:

"People I know have likened me to Nicola Horlick, but I am no superwoman."

"First and foremost, I am a mother. Combining home and work means I am always tired and always guilty - guilty that you are not giving enough time to everything."

Michael Beverley, her new boss at Arthur Andersen's northern regional office, said: "I don't think there are many women doing what she does. Like Nicola Horlick, she is a very capable lady."

Her work involves advising the management of companies on how to go public and matters such as flotations, takeover bids and rights issues. But one City insider said few women survived in this market for long because the companies demanded 24-hour-a-day attention which made combining work with family difficult.

Mrs Grunewald's husband, Richard, a consultant neurologist, prepares breakfast for Harriet, five, Max, three, and Zoe, one, after she has departed for work from their home in the Peak District at 6.45am.

Mother-of-five Nicola Horlick was earning £1m a year when, aged 35, she was sacked by Morgan Grenfell because it suspected she was about to take her team to a rival bank.

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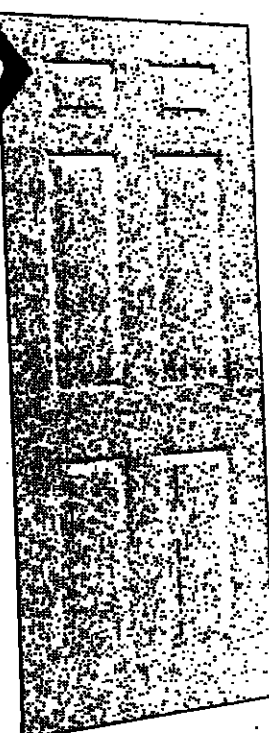
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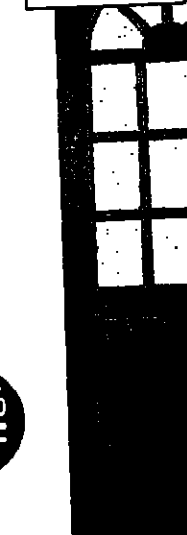
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Stars come out for Serpentine relaunch

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

STARS attending one of the glitziest nights of the year in the visual arts were told of the importance of the *Independent's* Save The Arts campaign yesterday.

The re-opening of the renovated Serpentine Gallery in Hyde Park, London, was attended by celebrities ranging from European royalty (the crown prince of Greece and Yugoslavia) to style queens Paloma Picasso, Mary Quant and Zandra Rhodes to comedians Harry Enfield and Jennifer Saunders and rock star Bryan Ferry.

The Serpentine has always been one of the most fashionable as well as one of the most radical of art galleries. Its patrons numbered Diana, Princess of Wales. And its radical nature was highlighted in its reopening exhibition by the Italian artist, the late Piero Manzoni, who offered included cans of his own excrement and lumps of cotton.

But a focus of last night was our campaign for the Chancellor to grant tax relief on all contributions to the arts.

In a speech before welcoming her guests, Julia Peyton-

**SAVE
THE
ARTS**

Jones, director of the Serpentine, said: "I am delighted that we have been successful in raising the money we needed. But I also want to support the *Independent's* campaign. Any help that we or organisations like us can have to raise money for the arts is absolutely critical."

The gallery has had a £4m facelift, with National Lottery money paying for three quarters of the work. Ironically, the former tea rooms still lack anywhere for visitors to have a cup of tea or any other refreshments, but Lord Palumbo, chairman of the gallery said this would be rectified in the future.

He added: "There is a wonderful paradox about this building - to find a tea room in a royal park and to turn it into a

gallery for contemporary art at the cutting edge is a very curious juxtaposition.

Architect John Miller said it had been difficult to preserve the character of the building but also incorporate new features, including an education studio. "It was a battle we had. It was often quite vigorous," he said.

Among Manzoni's works on show were mounted tufts of cotton and a collection of eggs with the artist's thumbprint upon them, and a series of straight lines which he printed on paper then rolled up and sealed in tubes with labels detailing the exact length of each line. Germano Celant, curator of contemporary art at New York's Guggenheim Museum, chose the pieces which have been included at the gallery.

He said Manzoni formed part of a trinity of artists who depict the body whose work can be seen in London at the moment, along with painter Francis Bacon and the fashion designer Alexander McQueen.



Art in the park: Julia Peyton-Jones, director of the Serpentine Gallery, which reopened yesterday after refurbishment

Photograph: Rui Xavier



Warning: Merda d'artista by Manzoni is at the Serpentine

Is it art? Or simply expensive excrement?

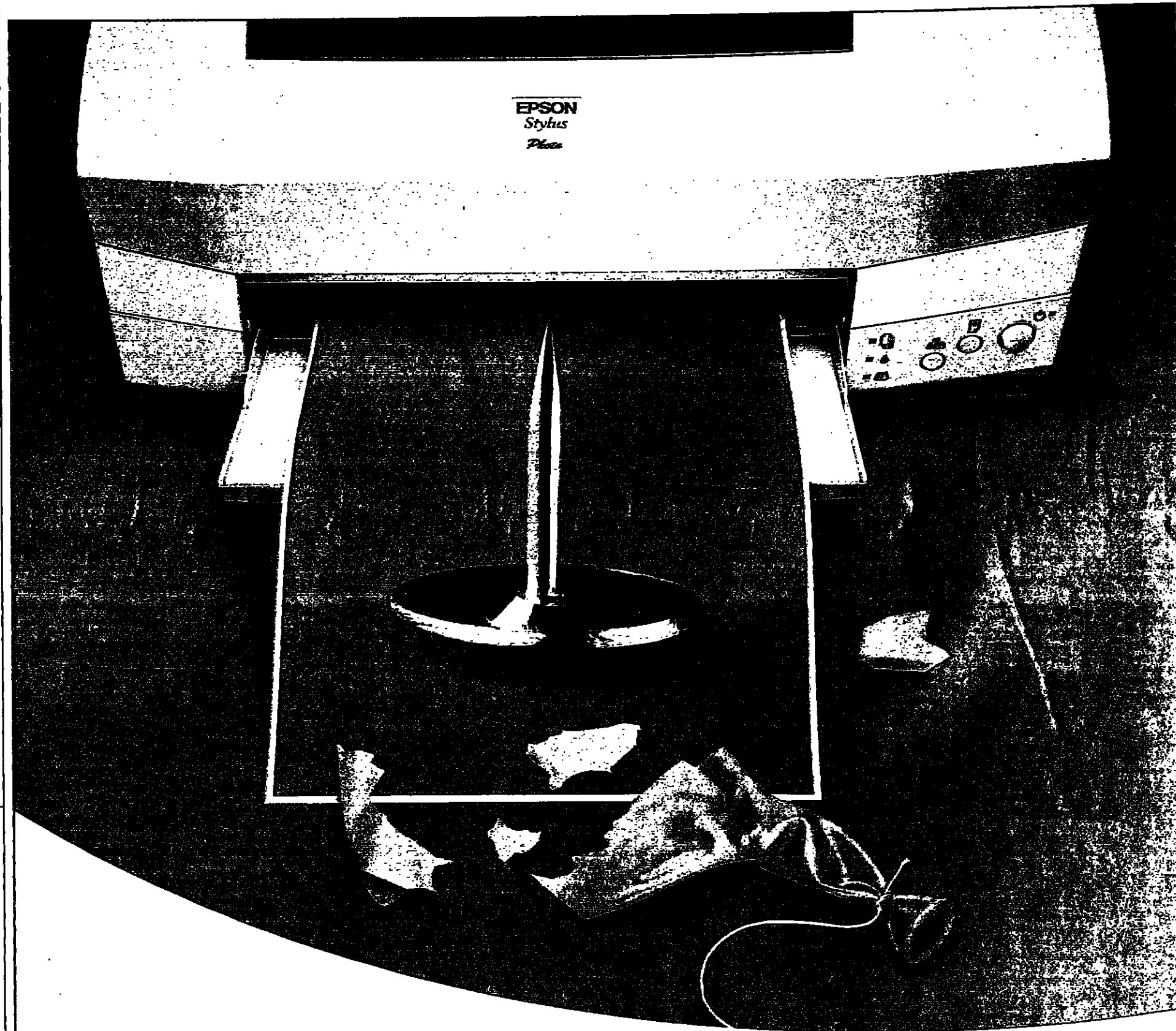
THE GREAT: the good and the glitzy at the Serpentine last night viewed an exhibition which contained two display cabinets showing cans of the late Piero Manzoni's excrement, writes David Lister.

He produced *Merda d'artista* (Artist's Shit) in 1961 at the height of the economic boom of post-war Italy as a signed and numbered edition of 90 that were weighed and sold for the equivalent of the current market rate of gold. Their labels describe the

contents as 30g of the artist's excrement, "naturally preserved".

Germano Celant, the curator of last night's exhibition, said: "The cans of *Merda d'artista* offer a frank criticism of how works of art are turned into desirable objects of special meaning and value. The cans are not meant to be opened and their true content remains the object of conjecture."

However, the content is no longer a matter of conjecture. One of the cans has leaked.



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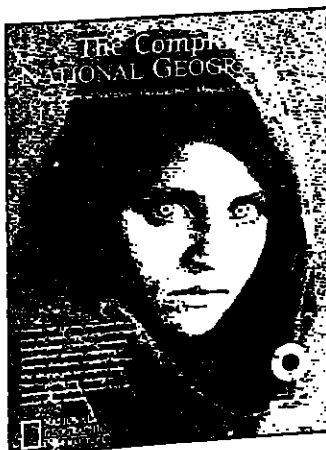
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South Korea ditches 'Asian values' mantra



On song: The pop star Michael Jackson being greeted by schoolboys in Seoul yesterday at the inauguration of Kim Dae Jung, the first South Korean leader drawn from opposition ranks
Photograph: Reuters

KIM DAE JUNG was inaugurated as President of South Korea yesterday and began his leadership with a speech rejecting the so-called "Asian values" that give economic growth priority over democracy and human rights.

More than 40,000 spectators, including retired heads of state and the singer Michael Jackson, attended the ceremony held in front of Seoul's National Assembly building. Doves were released into a warm winter sky, drums were beaten and a 21-gun salute was fired at the first inauguration of a South Korean leader drawn from the ranks of the opposition parties.

After the ceremony, mud which had been brought in from the different provinces of South Korea was used to plant a "tree of reconciliation", and a carnival procession of floats, dancers, musicians and vegetables paraded through the streets of Seoul. For all the festive arrangements, Mr Kim was frank about the "suffocating situation" facing his new government and the economic suffering that lies ahead.

"We are faced with a crisis

New president warns about economic crises, and sets out to woo the North, writes Richard Lloyd Parry in Seoul

which could bankrupt our country," the President warned.

"Consumer prices and unemployment will rise this year. Incomes will drop and an increasing number of companies will go bankrupt. All of us are being asked to shed sweat and tears."

Since the currency turmoil first hit East Asia last summer, the South Korean won has lost half of its value, forcing the closure of thousands of companies and a humiliating appeal for a \$60bn (£38bn) bail-out from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But unlike Indonesia, the other big victim of the crisis in Asia, the situation in South Korea has stabilised this year, thanks in part to Mr Kim's reassuring pledges to abide by the terms of the IMF agreement and not blunt its stipulations as a result of domestic pressure from trade unions and big busi-

ness. "Democracy and the market economy are two sides of a coin or two wheels of a cart: if they were separated we could never succeed," Mr Kim said, in an implicit rebuke to such leaders as Indonesia's President Suharto, who wielded authoritarian power and suppress political opponents in the name of "Asian values".

"Every nation that has embraced both democracy and a market economy has been successful. Nations... that have rejected democracy and accepted only a market economy have ended up suffering disastrous setbacks".

Mr Kim's half-hour speech, outlining the plans of his "government of the people", contained a check-list of the grave problems facing South Korea which, less than a year ago, ranked as the world's 11th-largest economy. He promised to decentralise government, at-

tract more foreign investment, and reform South Korea's huge conglomerates. It is their thirst for expansion at the expense of consolidation which is thought to have contributed to the country's economic plight. Mr Kim promised few specific measures, but opinion polls suggest the public has high hopes for him, after the moribund and discredited leadership of his predecessor, Kim Young Sam.

One subject on which the new President did make detailed proposals was North Korea, and the painful division which has existed on the peninsula since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

Mr Kim proposed an exchange of envoys between Seoul and the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and said he was ready to hold a summit meeting at any time.

"The Cold-War style North-South relations which for more than half a century have not allowed members of separated families to find out even whether their own parents and brothers and sisters were alive or dead... must end as soon as possible," he said.

A final triumph against all odds

THE MOST striking image in Seoul yesterday came at the beginning of the inauguration, when Kim Dae Jung, the new president, was greeting guests. There were former Japanese prime ministers, an ex-president of the Philippines, a retired German chancellor, the financier George Soros, and Michael Jackson. And there, framed by the huge screen above the stage, were two other heads, one bald and bespectacled, the other long and lugubrious.

They belonged to the former presidents Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo, among the most famous and most loathed in South Korea. The last time they were seen together like this was in court where, hands tied, they were sentenced to prison for murder and treason. Now they were chatting amiably with the new president, a man whose death they once plotted.

South Korean politics has al-



Mr Kim: Suffered jail, exile, abduction and a death plot

ways been subject to brutal about-turns. Presidents can be turned into convicts and then turned back into respected public figures. Yesterday the world witnessed another of these swings, when Mr Kim, a former dissident and political prisoner,

became president. After almost 40 years in opposition, he comes to power at his country's most difficult period since the 1950-53 Korean War. But he is already showing he has the quality that so many South Korean politicians lack, whether they are military dictators or democrats, which is the ability to compromise and forgive.

The progress of DJ, as he is known, follows that of the South Korean democracy movement as a whole, a bumpy, fractious, but finally triumphant rise to power. He grew up in Cholla, the poor south-western province, and was elected to the National Assembly in 1961.

A Catholic with, in the words of one writer, "a martyr's fatalistic certainty that what he is doing is right", Mr Kim spent six years in prison and 10 years in exile under the military dictators who ruled until 1987. In 1973 he was kidnapped by the

South Korean version of the CIA, which planned to drown him. In 1980 he was condemned death after a show trial. Both times, only US intervention saved him.

Before his victory in December he had lost three presidential elections, usually owing to vote-rigging by the government but once because of divisions within the democracy movement.

His most bitter fall-out was with his former friend, the outgoing president, Kim Young Sam, who became almost as implacable a foe as his other persecutors. But in the two months since his election, he has shown a knack for reconciliation. As president-in-waiting he has brokered an agreement on lay-offs between unions and employers, as well as approving the release from jail of the two men who nearly brought his career to an end once and for all.

Indonesia fires rage out of control

THE SMOG which blighted large areas of South-East Asia last year is returning to parts of Malaysia as forest fires burn out of control on Indonesian territory in the islands of Borneo and Sumatra, writes Richard Lloyd Parry.

At a meeting of South-East Asian environment ministers yesterday the Malaysian representative reported a reap-

pearance of the haze in Sabah and Sarawak, in the Malaysian part of Borneo. Last year the smog caused lung problems, drove away tourists and contributed to fatal accidents in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand and the Philippines. A report published yesterday said the haze caused \$1.4bn (£875m) of damage, \$1bn of it in Indone-

sia, and \$300m in Malaysia, most of it as a result of damage to health and lost tourism and industrial production. About 1,000 forest fires are burning in Kalimantan, the Indonesian portion of Borneo, and they have killed or put to flight endangered species such as orang-utans and proboscis monkeys.

Last year's problem

strained generally harmonious relations between Indonesia and its neighbours. Yesterday, the Singaporean *Straits Times*, a mouthpiece for the government, said no excuses would be accepted this time.

"What is at stake now is... Indonesia's reputation as a nation that can be relied on to fulfil its international commitments."

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Germany's Blair set to take on Kohl

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

GERHARD Schröder, the most popular opposition politician in Germany, was last night close to winning the coveted Social Democrat Party's nomination for Chancellor.

His selection would deal a severe blow to Helmut Kohl's re-election prospects. Mr Kohl, who is in the 16th year of his reign at the head of a coalition of Christian Democrats and Free Democrats, has trailed Mr Schröder in opinion polls for two years.

The governing parties' election strategy has, however, rested on the assumption that the Social Democrats would shun

mandates yesterday for a quick decision on which of the two men should lead them into battle against Mr Kohl. The matter will be settled next Monday, the day after Mr Schröder is expected to be endorsed by voters of Lower Saxony, the Land he has governed for eight years.

The polls suggest Mr Schröder is set to win about 44 per cent of votes in his region; roughly the same as four years ago. He will not fight for the national nomination, he has said, if he loses 2 per cent of his share.

The changing mood in the Social Democrat party was evident at its traditional Ash Wednesday meeting, held in Vilshofen, Bavaria. Amid the customary adulation for Mr Lafontaine, who delighted delegates with a fiery speech, participants could not disguise their yearning for power, rather than empty left-wing rhetoric. "Lafontaine has always spoken the truth, but that alone cannot help us any more. In an election campaign, Schröder is better," said one delegate.

"You have ensured the next Chancellor will be a Social Democrat," said Renate Schmidt, a member of the party praesidium that will choose the candidate. "You must make a simple and quick decision on who should sit at the front of the tandem."

Mr Lafontaine, who was beaten by Mr Kohl in 1990, has not given up, however. He has indicated that if Mr Schröder gains 2 or 3 per cent in Sunday's Lower Saxony elections, he will go gracefully. If the result falls in the grey zone between Mr Schröder's self-imposed trapdoor and the hurdle erected by his rival, then Monday's meeting will be a bloody affair.



Gerhard Schröder: Set to challenge Helmut Kohl

Mr Schröder's brand of centrist politics and throw their weight behind Oskar Lafontaine, a passionate combatant of the old school.

Mr Lafontaine and his friends on the party executive recently have contrived to belittle Mr Schröder's electoral appeal. But faced with the prospect of a protracted internal struggle, the leadership caved in to de-



Party time: Revellers taking part in the Mardi Gras Day parade through the streets of New Orleans. Photograph: Reuters

SA police battle security guards

By Mary Braid
in Johannesburg

"SECURITY guards fighting policemen in the streets," said a Johannesburg office worker wryly. "The criminals must be rolling about laughing."

This week, Johannesburg has seen its worst street violence since the 1994 democratic elections as thousands of security guards, on all-out national strike, have clashed with police.

Tuesday saw the most violent confrontations as thousands of guards defied police and again took to the streets in support of a 12 per cent wage increase. Ten policemen were injured when rioters met rubber bullets with bricks and stones and set vehicles alight.

Earlier, groups of strikers had toured the city centre attacking guards who were still working. One guard, bleeding and his uniform in shreds, had to seek refuge in a police van. The strikers' tactics were certainly violent but with the aver-

age security guard taking home less than £100 a month, it was hard not to sympathise with their complaints that they are risking their lives daily for a pittance.

Yesterday, the strikers again defied police to take to the streets for a third day. Officers in armoured vehicles prevented them from gathering in the same huge numbers and body searches resulted in 17 guns being seized from strikers. This time police were ahead of the game and there was less violence.

But the strikers - carrying placards warning policemen to stay away or "there will be civil war" - will be out in force again today after the breakdown of negotiations between employers and unions last night.

Few, if any countries, can boast a private security business as large as South Africa's; and few would want to. In the current crime explosion, the police force is stretched to breaking - and few, if any, companies are without a private security presence.

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STARTS TOMORROW AT CINEMAS EVERYWHERE

Teddy bear bomb is no picnic

A MAN who hijacked a Turkish jetliner with a teddy bear he said was a bomb is a "psychopath" with a drink problem who wanted to be on TV, said his wife and the police.

Mehmet Dag, 31, hijacked a Turkish Airlines jet with 62 passengers and five crew aboard shortly after take-off. Saying the teddy bear was loaded with ex-

plosives, he demanded to be flown to Tehran. Three passengers overpowered Dag during a refueling stop five hours into the ordeal.

"He is a psychopath," Diyarbakir police chief Gaffar Okan said after questioning Dag. His wife, Fidan Dag, told reporters that he was jobless and had a drinking problem.

DAILY POEM

Returns

By David Constantine

Returns: as when
That evening in summer on a sunny breeze
The Atlantic entered

A drop, one silver bead,
Out of it opening a whole water
Out of it flowering and relaxing over the patience of the flats

And the gladness of the salt-loving lives was palpable,
What could be floated, the carcasses
Were at a depth, the veins

Were filled, and we
In a room on a jut of land with a window out,
A captain's window, sea three sides the bed.

Into the chuckling sea we pushed our cries.

"Returns" comes from David Constantine's seventh collection, *The Pelt of Wasps*, published by Bloodaxe Books (£6.95).

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Fatalistic Iraqis hone art of survival

Robert Fisk in Baghdad sees how a suffering nation has adapted to constant crises

NOT long after they started operations in Iraq, the men from the Uncom arms inspection team arrived at Baghdad University to check out the science department. "They asked to see the chemistry lab," one of the teachers says. "They walked round the place. Then they laughed."

The incident said as much about Iraq's collapse as Uncom's behaviour. What should be mighty has become a mockery of itself. Even Baghdad's Museum of Natural Heritage, halfway after halfway of Tusaad-like Iraqis portraying their waxeselves as Sumerians, warrior kings and merchants, teachers and desert families, is laden with dust, its jaded figures collapsed forward as if themselves suffering from UN sanctions.

Scott Ritter and his Uncom boys haven't yet checked out the museum but Baghdad is alive with a story, confirmed by an Uncom inspector, of how the search team turned up late at night to investigate a compound north of Baghdad. After Major Ritter had hammered on the door, it was opened by some sleepy but startled nuns. Unfazed, Maj Ritter spent an hour in the convent cemetery, prowling through the darkness with a metal detector.

Iraq is full of such eccentricities. At the Al-Melad restaurant in Baghdad's central 28 April Complex, that date marking the truly unforgettable moment of Saddam Hussein's birth in 1937, clients can eat the finest sliced chicken, chips, chickpea sauce, sliced tomatoes and hot fresh Arab bread for £4 - a month's salary for an Iraqi civil servant. So the clientele are Iraqi businessmen, out-of-town farmers and bored intelligence officers. A very young Doris Day crackles over the loudspeaker as the occasional beggar child presses his nose to the window. "Que sera sera," she sings. "Whatever will be will be - the



Gunning for Saddam: HMS Nottingham being kept shipshape in Kuwait after patrolling the Gulf to enforce the embargo on Iraq Photograph: Reuters

future's not ours to see ... But how can Iraqis contemplate the future when they have to live by selling their last possessions in the Soukh Midan?

There must have been a hundred ill-kempt men and a few women standing in the drizzle there yesterday, below the pale blue cupola of the Jama'a al-Qushla mosque. At their feet lay the most pitiable things on display: rusting bath fittings and old car parts, torn shoes, moth-eaten rugs, used shirts, second-hand socks and a broken television set lying forlornly in a puddle. A woman in a soiled black chador covering looked up at us. Her name was Leila, she

said. "Our money is worthless - only God can help us."

Sohad, the middle-class wife of a former diplomat whose home overlooks the banks of the great brown greasy Tigris river, still has money. She too doesn't think of the future, although the tape over her living-room windows suggests she has thought about the next few weeks and months. "In the 1991 raids, all the glass came in, so I put this up about a week ago when we expected the bombings to start. Now I'm going to leave it there for a while. Whatever will happen, let it happen ... We've learned to take these things calmly. These are things we can

not control." Sohah is 81; and a long stay in India taught her the Hindu virtue of sublime patience. "If we can't get proper medicine, we will go back to old medicine. I had a knee problem. This friend of ours produced a medicine for me from an old herbal formula that the Chinese invented 2,000 years ago and I drank a cup of it every morning. Now my knee is better." Sohah's sister is 85. "We live from day to day, from hour to hour," she says. "I am not in control, so why bother about it? Now I just want to have a flower in my life, a flower from our garden, to look at during the day."

In the hall of their old home is a spread of sepia photographs of Turkish grandfathers, some in the tunics of the Ottoman army. "This is how we got our strength," Sohah says. "It comes from our Arab and Georgian and Kurdish and Turkish origins." Astonishing is the only word to describe the grip which Iraqis have kept over their sanity. A female gynaecologist works part-time in a cafe to maintain her standard of living. She has already sold her family silver and car. "Before the war I travelled a lot. I went to Lebanon and Holland and Germany. I could

travel now but I want to stay here, because this is my country and I love it so much. I could live nowhere else." Is this some form of fatalism. I ask myself as I hear the same story, over and over again - on my own, unaccompanied by government minders and spooks? Take the old lady who had sold almost all her Baccarat glasses. "I bought these glasses on my first visit to Paris in 1947," she told us. "Now I needed the money, so I said 'to hell with it' - we had it for a greengrocer and enjoyed it, so I let it go. For peanuts I sold it. I have only a jug and a carafe left."

Rifts open at UN over Baghdad deal

By David Usborne
in New York

JUST one day after Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, was accorded a hero's welcome in New York for brokering a deal with Iraq that averted military action in the Gulf, diplomatic rifts had surfaced yesterday on how that agreement should be handled by the Security Council.

Britain and the United States are determined that the Council should swiftly adopt a new resolution giving legal blessing to the so-called memorandum of understanding negotiated by Mr Annan on his visit to Baghdad. Russia and China, at least, are less convinced that any resolution is necessary.

Even if some text does emerge from the Council in the new few days, as still seems likely, the debate on what it should contain is likely to be highly fractious, diplomats warned yesterday. "We do not expect this to be plain sailing," one said.

France is expected to resist efforts by Britain and the US to

install the text with the strongest possible warning to President Saddam Hussein that any violation of the memorandum's provisions would result in almost instantaneous retaliation. While military strikes would not be explicit, they would be implied.

"We want the message to Saddam to be this: if you step out of line on this one, don't expect a manuscript letter of complaint from us, sent on an ocean liner taking three weeks to get to you," one diplomat in the US-UK camp explained.

The memorandum, which Mr Annan presented to the Security Council on his return from Baghdad on Tuesday, recommends Iraq to allow UN inspectors to continue their task of rooting out weapons of mass destruction in the country.

At the same time, however, it establishes new procedures for the inspection of eight sites designated as presidential palaces. Mr Annan agreed that for those sites, the usual Uncom inspectors will be accompanied by diplomats from foreign embassies in Baghdad.

'Le Monde' slates Blair as US poodle

By John Lichfield
in Paris

IN A scathing assault on British policy during the Iraqi crisis, France's most influential newspaper yesterday described Tony Blair as "all too happy" to play Robin to Bill Clinton's Batman and to "jump into the Batmobile".

Jean-Marie Colombani, editor of *Le Monde*, said in a signed front-page editorial that the European Union was "encumbered" by a British Prime Minister who forgot that he was the current EU Council president in his eagerness to suck up to Washington.

"Despite his proclaimed

ambition to take over the leadership of Europe, [Mr Blair] has at the first crisis promptly sunk into the traditional British mould of auxiliary in the American info-war. It was as if Blair-Robin was all too happy to be invited by Clinton-Batman to jump into the Batmobile."

Although a journalistic view, Mr Colombani's tirade is the most visible symptom to date of the great irritation felt in France at Britain's insistence on backing Washington to the hilt in the Iraqi crisis. It also represents the first serious criticism of Mr Blair in the French press, which has until now greeted him as a refreshing alternative to Thatcherism and Majorism.

SMALL CHANGE



With effect from 28 February 1998 the old, larger, heavier 50 pence coins will be withdrawn from circulation.



Springtime in the city

2 for 1 hotel offer

INTER-CONTINENTAL
HOTELS AND RESORTS

The Independent and Independent on Sunday have joined forces with Inter-Continental Hotels to offer readers a unique 2 for 1 weekend promotion. Available at a selection of hotels in the UK and Europe, rates for these special weekends include breakfast for 2 each morning and all taxes and service charges. This fantastic 2 for 1 deal, which represents a 50% saving on the usual weekend rates, is available exclusively to Independent readers, and is on offer every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from now right through until the end of April 1998.

HOW TO BOOK

Simply collect 4 out of the 7 tokens we will be printing every day until Friday 27th February. Choose the dates that you

want to stay and telephone the Inter-Continental Central Reservation office on 0181 847 2277. Callers should quote 'The Independent Weekend Promotion' when making their booking. On your arrival at the hotel you should present your tokens in order to qualify. All bookings are subject to availability.

EASTER BONUS

As an extra bonus for Independent readers, these amazing weekend rates will be available throughout the Easter period at the London and Edinburgh hotels. The 2 for 1 deal (or 4 for 2 during Easter) will be on offer for a period of five nights, starting from Thursday 9th April right through to Monday 13th April inclusive.

Hotel Inter-Continental London****

Located just off Park Lane, overlooking Hyde Park Corner and Buckingham Palace Gardens. With 458 elegantly decorated bedrooms and suites, a fabulous French Restaurant, informal coffee shop and modern health club and gym, the hotel boasts all the services and facilities you would expect from one of the capital's premier hotels. A brand new Club Inter-Continental executive floor is being launched in March.

Rate (per room per weekend) £189

May Fair Inter-Continental London****

On Stratton Street, this five star deluxe hotel is perfect for reaching the Bond Street shops, royal parks, theatres and galleries. It offers superb accommodation and facilities including a stylish, contemporary restaurant, Opus 70, popular cafe, traditional pub and sophisticated piano bar. Its health club boasts a swimming pool, gym, saunas and solarium.

Rate (per room per weekend) £105

Churchill Inter-Continental London****

In Portman Square in the centre of the West End with the Oxford Street just two minutes walk. Re-



Elegance and comfort at The George Inter-Continental, Edinburgh

cently renovated to the highest standards, the stunning Churchill Inter-Continental boasts luxurious accommodation, a superb restaurant, Clemenceaux and a new Churchill Bar & Cigar Den. Guests have the use of a private tennis court just opposite the hotel.

Rate (per room per weekend) £189

The Forum Hotel London

Perfectly situated close to the shopping area of Kensington and Knightsbridge. With 27 floors, many of the hotel's 910 bedrooms and suites enjoy superb views over the London skyline. A wide choice of restaurants and bars include the Gloucester Road Deli with its authentic 'New York' atmosphere and the Kensington Garden Cafe.

Rate (per room per weekend) £129

The George Inter-Continental Edinburgh

This first class hotel occupies a classic Georgian Building dating from the 18th century. In the heart of the city, its 195 bedrooms and suites enjoy superb views over the city and the Firth of Forth. Dining options include a choice of three restaurants and bars including the recently refurbished Carver's Restaurant, housed in one of the most spectacular dining halls in Edinburgh.

Rate (per room per weekend) £119

The 2 for 1 deal is also available at Inter-Continental and Forum hotels in Brussels, Berlin and Budapest. Special weekend rates are also available to a selection of other Inter-Continental Hotels in Europe including Paris, Vienna, Rome, Cannes and Prague (prices on application).

token

6

INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY
INTER-CONTINENTAL
HOTELS AND RESORTS

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

To participate in the offer you must collect 4 different numbered tokens from the seven we will print between February 21 and February 27. These tokens will be redeemable at any of the Inter-Continental and Forum hotels listed in The Independent and Independent on Sunday. All prices shown are per room per weekend (includes breakfast and VAT). All bookings must be made using the Inter-Continental Central Reservation line. These special weekend rates for a minimum 2 night stay are available on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights from Friday 27 February until April 26 1998 (but include the Easter period in April 9-13). Rates are payable in local currency and do not include travel. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotion. All reservations are subject to availability.

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A fantastic choice of locations is available, and each of the participating hotels is perfectly located for the city's shopping areas, attractions and places of interest.

المكان من الاماكن

open
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dad deal

They used plays, they used artifice, and it worked. The London Tube line to the Dome is an extravaganza of the age. Nonie Niesewand hears how architects conquered official meanness to build the stations of their dreams



The biggest, the brightest: The stations at Southwark, top, and North Greenwich, the stop for the Dome

Photographs: David Rose

Light at the start of the tunnel

"DON'T worry," Peter Mandelson reassured David Frost on his Sunday breakfast show as he discussed the Millennium Dome and its junior companion Baby Dome. "The Jubilee Line Extension will be up and running early next year." You bet it will. The Government's reputation hangs upon it, because it will be the main route to the Dome - New Labour's monument.

Mr Mandelson's reassurances were needed because construction of the tube route is running a year late, because of signalling problems. Apart from the convenience which the new line will bring to those working in London Docklands (including the staff of this newspaper) by giving them a rapid connection to the centre of London, it also provides London Underground with an opportunity to prove once more that it is a great patron of architecture, just as it was during the heyday of the Thirties.

Roland Paoletti, who is responsible for the station project, believes that London Underground needs to make its mark

in the 21st century, "more like jazz than chamber music". So he chose a team of "rigorous structuralists" to endlessly improvise with their designs for 11 stations along the route. He believes that there should be no discordant notes, but no bland corporate uniformity either. Even a claustrophobic can handle the big wide open spaces he envisages with as much natural light beamed down.

Integrity is a word he uses a lot and he likes to remind people of his Tuscan roots and the unfinished Florentine churches that he loves. "If I can't afford it, I prefer to leave detailing unadorned, unfinished. There's a certain rigour to it."

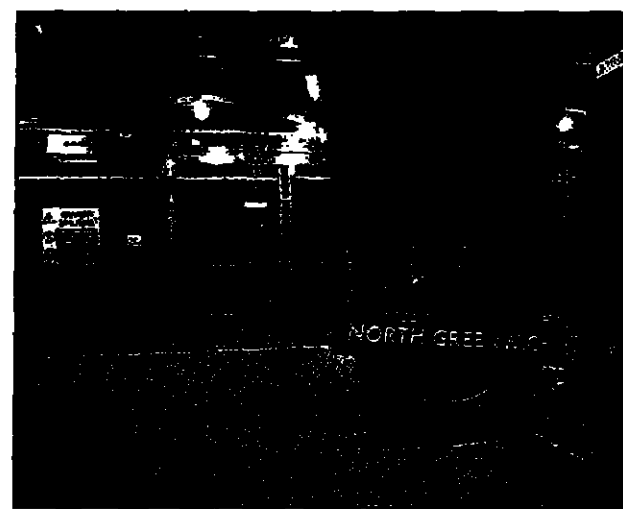
Vigour, robustness, integrity are qualities he admires. Not stylistic flourishes. But drama, yes. Paoletti trained as an architect at Manchester with Norman Foster and worked in Venice with Carlo Scarpa. Seven years ago he began the search for London based architects - they didn't have to be Londoners but they had to use the city infrastructure



The city will pour into Alsop's North Greenwich Station if the anticipated 12 million visitors to the Millennium Dome do arrive. Roland Paoletti doggedly fought to build a really big station here. But that was long before the dome - and all the traffic it would generate - was conceived. "You never ever put in an underground like a heart trans-

plant after the development. Build the underground and let the city come to it."

One huge concourse in pale concrete makes it the biggest underground station in Europe. Jammy blue-tiled columns take the eye upwards in this cavernous space to the silver belled roof like a plane fuselage hovering high overhead. By comparison the tunnel for the



trains are tiny. These changes in scale are as giddy as adventuring in Wonderland, and as reflective as a looking glass, which is curious because there is no source of natural light. The ticket office is a skewed steel framed window.

Paoletti's brief to the architectural practices who tendered for the job seven years ago was to make sure they let engi-

neering inform their designs. "I remind architects when they get too pansy about detailing that this is a station, not a room. There's a railway running through it."

A latter-day Kublai Khan swopping Southwark for Xanadu, architect Richard MacCormac from MacCormac Jamieson Prichard built his Jubilee Line Extension station

like a dome to beam light down 12 metres into caverns measureless to man. A half conical light well which sticks up above ground like a ship's funnel beams daylight down into the sparkling backlit blue glass mezzanine hall designed by Alex Tschenko. Once the computer configured just how 600 glass triangles could clad an elliptical cone, the architects invented a spidergrip-like system of fingers to hold the glass in a steel frame and allow subtle variations in the grip. A silk screened pattern changes from opaqueness at ground level to translucency at the top.

Known for their pure white polished plaster like travertine, MacCormac, Jamieson, Prichard cast it on site. Forty lorries drove around casting in one go the swooping drum-like entrance. Tapered steps exaggerate the Indiana Jones scale of this temple to travel. A big circular glass brick inspectors' booth is modelled on one designed in the Thirties by Hordern for London Underground. Richard MacCormac is

funny about the time lapse his station went into, Tardis-like, from the original commission seven years ago. Then, the Tories saw art in public works as squandering of public money. So he introduced Alex Tschenko's brilliant glass wall as cladding, which it isn't. By the time Southwark planning committee worried over the half-moon lightwell jutting above ground, the architects had learnt to describe it as sculpture. The architects are most proud of the fact that by saving tunnelling on a 40-metre stretch they saved their fees four times over in the first six weeks.

The popular misconception that "design excellence doesn't come cheap" is unpopular with Paoletti. It grieves him. "Design excellence incorporates economy. Ugly little stations would have cost more. Take the integrity at Westminster between the Houses of Parliament and the Jubilee Line station by Michael Hopkins. It would have been very expensive to plan both buildings separately. His design cohesion makes it absolute."

Where are the volunteers?

RICHARD Wilson, actor and labour-luvvie, emerged from the downtown clip joint in Iwao, the Philippines' second city. "I've just been propositioned by a sweet girl," he remarked, as officials from Voluntary Service Overseas, the UK charity, ushered Wilson away from a street-side conversation with the amiable male boss of the den of iniquity. The star was to meet more of its women "GROs" (guest relations officers - strippers and prostitutes) who run a self-help organisation and whom VSO is helping.

The support of people like Wilson - best known as the curmudgeonly Victor Meldrew of *Ce Foot in the Grave* - and the publicity which they can attract - is vital to the VSO in its 4th birthday year. For today the organisation is to announce that it faces a chronic shortage of the right sort of volunteers.

In some skills areas their numbers have halved in two years. Mr Blair's message about caring Britons seems to be falling on deaf ears, at least amongst people of "prime" working age - the mid-twenties to mid-thirties - who, the Charities Aid Foundation notes, are not volunteering as they used to. VSO in part blames the "Feel Great" society. But it is not just selfishness which is cited by Simon Waits, its spokesman. "We do live in a Me-first society," he says. "But actually VSO has a part in that. It could be self-interest which would bring people to VSO. People do work with 10 times the responsibility they'd get in the UK work-

The Me First generation apparently doesn't do it for others. Richard D North reports on a recruiting drive by VSO

ing unsupervised for much of the time. We need to get that message across to everyone, including business."

Another problem VSO has to contend with is that younger people simply have not heard of it. Yet VSO is held in much affection by its past alumni, amongst them high-flyers such as James Lowden, group finance director of Blue Circle, which made VSO one of its charities of the year in 1996 and 1997. Jon Snow, of *Channel 4 News*, cites his VSO experience as a watershed in his life.

The current generation of nearly 2,000 volunteers also

needs to be more skilled than their forerunners. They are often in mid-career, and professional. According to Fiona Lewis, VSO's head of placements, "Years ago, say within education, volunteers could go overseas who weren't qualified teachers. Now, as a broad generalisation, we provide skills which cannot be found in-country. So we don't just send foresters but forestry lecturers."

VSO needs people who are at the stage in their lives when they are likely to be at the height of their careers, or already have their own families. That makes the strong characters whom

Wilson met volunteering all the more remarkable. Elles Santegoets, in her 40s, was recruited through VSO's Dutch offshoot. She gave up working with prostitutes in Holland to work in Davao. "It's like there's this little empty space that you want to fill up," she said. "It's as though I have found the last missing piece of my life."

Like many VSO workers, Santegoets is in the Philippines at the invitation of VSO's NGO (non-governmental organisation) partner, which pays half her salary. The workers' stays are hardly ever longer than two years. They need to build

something which will outlive their secondment.

Working among stunning rice terraces in the mountainous north of the country, Simon Taylor and a local colleague from the Philippines' Rural Reconstruction Movement were introducing micro-machines which use streams to generate electricity or to grind rice. But it was important that Taylor transferred the right habits and enthusiasm to others. Otherwise the machines he left behind would break and rust through neglect.

The important achievement for VSO people is that they not only help to produce a basket, or a mill or a fish, or help a prostitute avoid disease. It's not even merely someone better educated. It's a strengthened local, often volunteer, institution which really counts.

Local NGOs are the cement of the emerging informal democracy in the poor world, and VSO is helping its partners prove that surprisingly often, you don't have to be rich and powerful to influence events.

Victor Meldrew would probably approve: his is a battle against the getting and spending, and the littering. Yahoos he sees about him. Under his carapace, there might even be that increasingly elusive figure, a VSO field worker.

If you are interested in VSO's work, you can visit a special fair, *Volunteering World*, this Saturday at Westminster Central Hall, London, free. Enquiries 0181-730 7500, manned on Saturday.



Richard Wilson with Elles Santegoets, left, and hostess

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

The Independent

fashion

Spring 98 special

Art and fashion are having a fling. Our 48-page fashion special gets you up to date with the latest from both worlds. Sarah Moon photographs this spring's newest looks in the spirit of the season's muse, Frida Kahlo. Go behind the scenes with Vivienne Westwood as she explains the inspiration behind her new advertising campaign. And see exclusive pictures by Richard Billingham, star of the Royal Academy's Sensation show.

Free with The Independent
Saturday 28 February

Friends: the new family

Once it was mum who was always there for you. Now it's more likely to be a network of friends, says Vanessa Thorpe

WHEN the telephone rings after 10.30pm most women sense it must be one of only four or five people on the other end of the line. A sister? Maybe. A lover? If you are lucky. A mother? Probably not at that time of night.

Much more likely it is a close female friend; someone calling to tell you that they have split up with their boyfriend again or locked themselves out of their flat, or perhaps simply that *Carry On Camping* has just started on BBC1.

Such friendships are about intimacy and trust and are being increasingly relied upon to sustain people in an age when families are spread far and wide, and marriages fragment so easily.

Erika Reed, a 32-year-old solicitor, is nurtured by her 10-year friendship with her married friend Jane Mee.

"I was very ill one night and so I rang Jane at about 3am," she recalls. "I wanted to ask her what she thought was wrong and told her all my symptoms. She was very supportive and even came round to take me to the doctors the next morning. When you live on your own, the fact that she came round to make sure I went was great."

Since the huge popularity of the American sitcoms *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, with their idealised picture of upfront camaraderie and knowing banter between pals, the status of platonic friendships has reached an all-time high. You may fall in and out of romantic relationships, these shows imply, but you had better keep those old buddies on side if you want to survive.

Tonight strong female bonds enjoyed by people like Erika and Jane will be celebrated on the small screen in the first installment of a three-part BBC drama called *Real Women*. Written by Susan Oudot and taken from her best-selling novel, it charts the lives of five former school friends and puts their relationships with each other right in the foreground. For once, family, husbands and work are all purely incidental.

The actress Francis Barber who plays Anna and stars alongside Pauline Quirke, Gwyneth Strong, Michelle Collins and Lesley Manville, found the script reflected her own experience. "Friendship is about



Erika (left) on Jane: 'I can be stroppy with Jane because I think we are close enough; when I see my family there is never a cross word' Andrew Buurman

commitment and loyalty," says Barber. "I don't think it matters how far apart you are. One is in an unfulfilling marriage, one is a career woman, another is a 'good time girl', one is hoping to have a child, and the fifth, played by Manville, is a closet lesbian. *Real Women* is inspired by lots of people I know," says Oudot. "One friend said to me, 'Every story that we've ever told each other is in the book,' which is true."

With Erika's family 300 miles away from her London flat, it is Jane who keeps a spare set of keys and waters her plants and feeds her cat whenever she is away. "Having Jane around gives me a certain amount of freedom. It is not the kind of

thing that you could ask anyone to do, but she knows I will do the same for her."

What is more, Erika says she would not even have her flat in the first place were it not for her friendship with Jane. "When I was looking for somewhere to buy, she was the person that I would turn to for approval. Buying a flat is a very big thing and if your family were close by they would come and have a look with you," Erika feels that because she no longer sees her family in an everyday way she now enjoys that sort of relationship with her best friends. "I can be stroppy with Jane because I think we are close enough. I will actually say if I'm a bit annoyed, whereas when I see my family these days there is never a cross word."

A supportive circle of women inevitably expands to include friends of friends too. Jane and Erika have helped each other's chums to find both jobs and

practical solutions to smaller scale dilemmas such as the name of a good plumber.

Jane and her husband may move away from London soon, but the prospect of leaving such a support system of friends worries her. "My friends have more to do with my life than my family and therefore I don't have to go through endless explanations," she says. "Friends are more up to date with what is happening."

Like Erika, however, she is still emotionally close to her family and has a long-term licence to behave a little temperamental with them. "You are more careless with your relationship with your family," she admits. "While I suppose you have to nurture your friends a bit more."

The modern emphasis on personal happiness rather than on family duty looks likely to continue to steer people away from daily involvement with their relatives, yet for Rebecca Cavanagh, a 32-year-old

book editor, it is crucial that a friend should offer more than bland reassurance. "You don't need a friend who is as judgemental as a family member might be, but you don't want someone who is accepting of everything."

Rebecca, like Lesley Manville's character in *Real Women*, has recently decided to tell close friends about a new gay relationship. Telling friends first, she says, made it easier to talk about it with her family. "When I first got together with Annie I knew I could tell my close friends straight away, while with my family—even my sisters—I was not quite so sure."

With all the benefits of sisterhood, of course, come the headaches. Women, unlike men, must never forget their close friends' birthdays. And then there is the fraught question of who to nominate for your BT best friend telephone discount. *Real Women*, BBC1 9.30pm

Ambridge claims its latest victim

You could tell John Archer had it coming to him. It wasn't his affair with a single mother and a recently cranked-up social life — admittedly more spoken about than actually heard on air — that cursed him. Because it is not moral retribution *Archers* characters need worry about — it is moving centre stage that gets the Tippex hovering over their name on scripts.

The character of John has recently been ending the show moaning about the state of his life — and ending the show is always dangerous in *Borchester*. When a character is central to the main plot strand you can almost start humming the theme tune before it kicks in because you know they will be given some heavily portentous line to end the episode.

John and Tony Archer have for weeks been arguing about "fixing the tractor". Real *Archers* aficionados should have guessed that this would be the instrument of death. Although I suppose given the soap's setting he was unlikely to be hit by a tube train.

The other angel of death on the show is Shula. You can almost guarantee that whoever sops Shula is clinking glasses with and whispering sweet nothings to on New Year's Eve will not make it through the lambing season.

They don't always die like Mark Hebden of course, but they'll be off out of the series. In fact most of the women have the capacity to turn perfectly pleasant male characters into wife-beaters or bankrupt fraudsters.

This is why I love *The Archers*. The insufferably twee characters and the Identikit middle-class female voices are an irrelevance compared with the joy of the show's dangerous undercurrents. But this is an acquired taste. You can only learn to love its black heart by getting to know its rhythms and nuances.

For starters you have to get through the broadcasting world's most surreally unappealing pre-trailer. Only on Radio 4 could a continuity announcer try to tempt you to listen to a programme by saying, "And now. In the shop Pat is talking to Debbie..."

Like televising archaeology — as in *Time Team* — this is all so British it hurts. And now that it is getting more exciting — "It used always to be about cows getting their udders stuck in a cattle grid," said the actor who played John — we have even more portentous lines to look forward to.

Paul McCann

DILEMMAS

My nephew is overweight and his parents feed him on burgers



VIRGINIA IRONSIDE

Eva's worried about her delightful, overweight nephew. His mother never eats vegetables, his father doesn't believe in fruit, they live on a diet of fat and starchy foods and go to McDonald's every Saturday — but she doesn't want to say anything because she gets on well with the family

I have a friend who is very health-conscious. She forbids her children sweets, or chocolate biscuits, she insists they take sticks of celery in their lunchbox to school instead of crisps, and feeds them baked potatoes, salads, beansprouts, pasta and chicken. No red meat. When the children come round they gorge themselves on all the chocolate biscuits, sweets, crisps and burgers that I keep for them.

I have another friend who panders to her daughters' foodie whims, to such an extent that everyone in the family has different meals at different times. One is a vegetarian and has to be cooked a special meal every evening; one is allergic to wheat; the mother's husband is on a cholesterol-free diet, and she never eats tomatoes, peppers, any drink with additives... the list is endless. When they come round they have to bring their own rice-biscuits, organic bread, non-dairy spread — indeed they are impossible to have to lunch as a family. And another little boy I know used to come round to my house for supper and last on his fish fingers being peeled — and then he left the fish and only ate the crumbs on the outside.

These families are indeed well on the way to getting health and dietary problems in the future. They are also going to develop social problems, finding it hard to go out to restaurants, or to friends. They have made such a to-do about food that their lives are ruled by their diet. The children are heading for all kinds of eating disorders.

Compared with these families, Eva's nephew, and his family, seems to be behaving in the most normal way, just eating what they like. Never did my son crave sweets — because they were freely available to him. Henry VIII never ate veg-

etables and though he was a bit of a fatty it didn't seem to affect his general health or his exuberance about life. And anyway, every day we read contradictory evidence about what foods are good for us and what aren't. Margarine gives you cancer; drink is bad for you but a couple of glasses of red wine keeps heart disease away. Recently it was reported that the chemical additives sprayed on some tomatoes can help keep men's prostate problems at bay, or something. Salads are good but some pre-washed supermarket salads contain salmonella.

Of course Eva could ask her nephew round and introduce him to the charms of organic oranges, free-range courgettes, wild salmon and corn-fed basil, but I suspect he would just say "Ugh!" as any normal child does to food it's never seen before. But frankly, what the hell business is it of hers whether her nephew is overweight or not? They sound like a very jolly family if they all go out for a meal together on a Saturday night. And as for that ghastly snobbishness about McDonald's — a double-decker and a glass of milk is a pretty healthy meal.

I often pop in there for a delicious cheeseburger and orange juice when I'm on the run despite the faces made by friends who wrongly imagine I'm helping myself to a diet of BSE and cancer germs in a bun. Just because the McDonald's clientele is made up of people on lower incomes because the food is so cheap doesn't mean the food's not good or tasty.

Eva should keep her trap shut and thank God that her nephew is "delightful". And perhaps she should ask herself over one Saturday night on their McDonald's outing and find out exactly what she's been missing.

WHAT READERS SAY

Try dropping a few hints

It's always difficult voicing criticism of friends and relatives. The desire not to offend can be so great that you keep your mouth shut inappropriately, and later, kick yourself for your cowardice. The bottom line is to consider which would be worse — risking a moment's pique by mentioning your nephew's diet, or silently watching him turn into an obese child and portly adult, with all the attendant risk, from social isolation to eating disorders.

Criticism is better taken when veiled as innocent remarks, and stripped of any blame. Instead of slating your sister's cooking, try introducing the child to new and exotic fruits with the chance remark that you read somewhere you should be eating five pieces of fruit or vegetable a day. You could tell your sister you're on a health kick as you've just read up on the health risks of obesity. If all else fails, you could be direct but calm and tactful. *Dr Leyla Sunal Glasgow*

So what's the problem?

Eva takes the biscuit. She is worried about her nephew eating the wrong foods and being

plump; she claims that the child's parents have a peculiar attitude towards diet. If that is really breaking her heart as she says, then I have nothing but sympathy for her. Her nephew, apart from being plump, seems to be in good hands and I recommend that Eva keeps her mouth buttoned up. *Martin Russell Newcastle upon Tyne*

Introduce healthy habits

Tell them casually about your efforts to improve your fitness and eating habits. You could ask your sister/brother-in-law for some moral support by going on the same diet or attending the gym with you. You could take your nephew on cycle rides; take up tennis with him, find out about sporting activities he could become involved in. Ask them round to yours for supper occasionally, or better still, do a cookery course together and then take it in turns periodically to prepare family suppers. By setting an example when they are in your company, the message may filter through without causing offence. Gently let slip a few white lies: about your friend's son whose doctor warned he'd be wearing dentures by the time he was 20 if he continued to drink cola... Drastic maybe, but in the light of the growing evidence of the link between diet and disease, almost any measure should be

taken if it looks like it could have some effect. Failing all that, be blunt. *Kim Cambridge*

Diet is dangerous territory As I understand it, children's dietary needs are different from adults'. Apparently some children are becoming malnourished because their parents feed them an adult-style, low-fat diet in the mistaken belief that it is good for them. Also younger and younger children are developing anorexic tendencies, believing themselves to be fat, when in fact they are just about to put on a growth spurt when all "excess" fat will be evenly redistributed.

Given these issues I would be extremely hesitant to stay trying to interfere in a child's diet unless I were properly qualified to comment. I would particularly urge Eva not to comment in the children's hearing.

I also think any interference would be almost certain to cause conflict with the parents — if they are as well educated as Eva seems to think, they can hardly be unaware of the issues surrounding diet. This may allow the children to develop their own preferences, or even to preserve a quiet life. *Alison Keys Brigg, Humberside*

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NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

ister dreams? And what can I do about them?

I suffer from the most terrible nightmares. I dread going to sleep because I know I will dream about tortured animals, child abuse, the most horrible things you can think of. I often wake up terrified, and the dreams often linger with me all day, far more intense than the reality of life. Is there any way I can stop them? I don't think I'm depressed; I'm normally cheerful; but why do I have these sin-

Letters are welcome, and everyone who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet from me at the Features Department. The Independent, E14 5DL. (Fax: 0171-293 2182), by Tuesday morning. And if you have a dilemma of your own that you would like to share, please let me know.

هذا من الأصل

THE INDEPENDENT

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Hague gropes for a New Toryism

WILL THE real Will step forward, please? During the past few weeks there have seemed to be two William Hagues struggling for possession of the Tory leader. Like ferrets in a sack they have fought, and the blood is trailed across successive half-coherent speeches. Is he a liberal or a conservative, a localist or a centralist, a reactionary or a progressive, a preserver of the truth and beauty of the Ancient Constitution or a radical moderniser? At the moment he seems to be dashing from side to side of the political track faster than an Olympic bobsleigh.

Some say that at this stage in the game, with Tory recovery still far off, inconsistency does not matter. Look at Disraeli and Peel – they rose out of adversity and played two ends against the middle. (Tory historical consciousness leaps over such problem figures as Churchill and Thatcher.) Besides, they say, the Tory leader's priority ought to be opposition; he should be harrying the Government at every turn. But can credible opposition really just forget what the Tory government in power till last May actually did, let alone those principles which Toryism is supposed to embody? A gang of opportunists calling Tony Blair opportunist sound a mite unconvincing.

Yet we hear Francis Maude berating the Dome at every turn, conveniently ignoring who launched the project and oblivious to the support given it by the Tory grandee Michael Heseltine. We see William Hague waving his support for constitutional innovations – such as an elected assembly for London – with one hand while, with the other, he bats away at the reforms like an irate colonial colonel bothered by mosquitoes. We now love local councils, says William Hague, but we hate really-existing local government as practised in Hackney or Islington or Manchester.

As for Europe, we hardly need John Redwood's inability to keep the lid on his xenophobia to see that this dog has not lain down and died since Mr Hague won the leadership; it just lies there, a political Flound of the Baskervilles, occasionally snarling. The Tory party, apparently oblivious of any responsibility to think constructively about the destiny of this country, is left wallowing in the wake of Chancellor Kohl, hoping that his project for monetary union will come adrift, not realising that Tony Blair has positioned himself far better for such an eventuality.

On the few occasions since his election when William Hague has shown his own instincts he has appeared a not unattractive leader of what there will always need to be in British politics – a progressive, pro-property, anti-taxation right-of-centre party. Reviled though he was for wearing a baseball cap to the Notting Hill Carnival, that was the gesture of one who realised where our culture hummed, whose own preference is for a politics of inclusion.

But since then he seems to have allowed himself to be continually hemmed in. Take, this week, a plethora of pronouncements on Britain's electoral future. The anal-retentive tendency seems to have conquered. Just why, for example, is proportional representation such a threat, either to the Tory party or to the nation? Is the fabric of British political life so stretched, so weakened that we cannot afford a glorious experiment in choice and diversity? If PR were the threat his speech to the Centre for Policy Studies would imply, what does Mr Hague offer as an alternative means of persuading people that parliamentary politics is for them, that the system will allow them to vote successfully for representatives they can trust?

Are we any the wiser than we were about Tory ambitions for the House of Lords? William Hague, a meritocrat, seems to have been so overawed by the lineage of Robert Cranborne (Tory leader in the Lords) that he now feels compelled to support the hereditary principle as the basis for a second chamber. Forward to the next century with a gang of drooling, property-owning aristocrats – is that really the kind of thing the Saatchi brothers are going to be invited to sell on Mr Hague's behalf?

Tony Blair ought, we believe, to be a lot more radical in his thinking. But at least New Labour has begun the process of political renewal. What have the Tories to lose by joining the hunt for new forms by which the popular voice can find expression, new methods to secure people's assent to political decisions? On this week's evidence William Hague is still too much a captive of his party's stick-in-the-mud wing. His very future as party leader, let alone the future capacity of the Tories to fight the good democratic fight, depends on his breaking free.

Male Crusties' Club



IT MIGHT call itself after Mary the Good, but no Marys, or Ursulas, Sheilas or Joans are to be made welcome in the St John's Wood home of the MCC. It's tempting, in response to that vote, to invoke Groucho Marx's principle – what good woman (or self-respecting man for that matter) would want to be a member of such a club? A substantial minority is evidently made up of crusties whose misogyny and fear of change outstrips their sense of public responsibility.

And isn't that the real point here? The issue has nothing to do with gender on the pitch: it is about a social club with a public and to some extent a political identity. The MCC is one of those peculiar British institutions which, ostensibly private, has acquired official responsibilities. It regulates the laws of the game of cricket. As such it cannot just stand aside from history or that (slow) process by which our society recognises the existence of women in its public space and, gradually and grudgingly, its male power-holders make way for them to share it. The members of the MCC may not like it but they symbolise the width of institutional exclusion. Their vote sends a signal, both at home and overseas. It is affected, anachronistic and wrong.



MILES KINGTON

I WAS up in London the other day helping to plan the March Against The Countryside (yes, the little-known March AGAINST The Countryside, planned as a counterblast to the Countryside March – but more about this tomorrow). Anyway, so there I was in London when I bumped into my old friend Adrian Wardour-Street, the doyen of the PR business, the man who makes Max Clifford look like Max Clifford. I steered him into the nearest catering establishment and asked him what he was working on now.

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PICTURE OF THE DAY



Open door: this photograph by David Rose of Gerry Adams leaving the Sinn Féin offices in Belfast comes from a portfolio that won for The Independent the title of Newspaper of the Year in the British Picture Editors' Awards, announced yesterday. The paper also received an award for best use of black and white photography

What now for Iraq?

THE AGREEMENT reached over the weekend in Baghdad can be attributed to the show of force in the Gulf, unanimity at the critical moment in the UN Security Council, and the determination and skill of the Secretary General. While the immediate task is to ensure that the work of the inspectors will indeed proceed without interference, other aspects of the crisis should not be neglected.

First, the plight of the long-suffering people of Iraq. Last week, on the initiative of the United Kingdom, the Security Council agreed to an increase in the amount of humanitarian aid available to them. The citizens of Iraq deserve to be told, by all possible means, not only that they have the sympathy of the international community but that their suffering will end if their leaders now honour the promises to allow weapons inspectors free movement which they first made in 1991 and repeated last weekend.

Second, respect for the dignity of Iraq, to which representatives of the regime attach special importance. Such respect would be readily forthcoming were it not for the Iraqi regime's persistent disregard of its obligations under Article 55 of the UN Charter. This calls on member states to promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all". The 16th of March will mark the tenth anniversary of the slaughter by chemical weapons of several thousand inhabitants of the Kurdish town of Halabja. Nor has the fate of thousands of Shia inhabitants of the marshes in southern Iraq following the Gulf war been forgotten. The United Nations should now pursue the search for a remedy for the inconsistency between Article 55 and Article 2.7, which precludes intervention in matters "within the domestic jurisdiction of any member state".

Third, the emphasis the United States has placed on the importance of strict compliance with UN resolutions has prompted comparisons between American attitudes to Iraq and to the deadlocked peace process between the Palestinians and Israel. The point has been made that Israel

remains in breach of a number of UN resolutions. There is an opportunity here for the Prime Minister to use the UK's presidency of the European Union to promote a European appeal to President Clinton, with whom he has established a close working relationship, to adopt a more balanced policy towards the Middle East. This, he could argue, would serve wider Western interests in this important region.

Sir TERENCE CLARK
Ambassador to Iraq 1985-89
Sir STEPHEN EGERTON
Ambassador to Iraq 1980-82
Sir DONALD MATTLAND
UK Representative to the UN 1973-74; to the EC 1975-79
Sir JOHN MOBERLY
Ambassador to Iraq 1982-85
DAVID SUMMERHAYES
Ambassador to the Disarmament Committee, Geneva, 1979-82
Sir HAROLD WALKER
Ambassador to Iraq 1990-91
Bath

SADDAM HUSSEIN recognises when it is necessary to take one step back in order to be able to take two steps forward later on.

He will now do what is necessary to get the UN inspectors off his back and out of Iraq as quickly as possible. With sanctions consequently lifted, he will buy new weapons, and rebuild his chemical and germ warfare capabilities. The latter are cheap and quick to construct, and are easily camouflaged as food, pharmaceutical or chemical industries – as the UN has found.

Bill Clinton won't still be around in three years; Saddam will. He can afford to gamble on a less resolute US, an inconsequential Britain and an indecisive EU. With no UN inspectors to keep him in check, there is every prospect of an escalated repeat showing of this latest Gulf crisis at the start of the Third Millennium – but with a different

LETTERS

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Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

outcome. The need to be rid of Saddam has not gone away.

PHILIP RATCLIFFE
Maidenhead, Berkshire

CLINTON and Blair say it is their threat of force which has created the diplomatic agreement and averted (for the moment) their bombing of Iraq. It is surely the widespread opposition to the war by people in America and Britain which has made these overgrown playground bullies back down.

But the bombs are still in their hands. We will not be safe until the sanctions are ended and all the troops and weapons pulled out.

JOHN NICHOLSON
Manchester

Right to roam

ROBIN HANBURY TENISON (letter, 23 February) seems to think that voluntary agreements on access to the countryside are the best way forward. Unfortunately this has not been the case. The 1949 Countryside Act made provision for voluntary agreements and, to quote Angela Eagle, Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions: "Although some use has been made of existing access provision, generally, they have not been implemented sufficiently widely."

Voluntary agreements can also be broken. Would the landowners be quite so keen to allow access if a government less sympathetic to ramblers were in power and there were no threat of introducing right-to-roam legislation?

STEVE BARBER
Beeston, Nottinghamshire

I AM delighted to see responsible members of the public using the footpaths and bridleways that run across my farm. I have a busy main road that runs through the middle and the adjoining banks and hedgerows are lit-

tered with empty cans, cartons and all manner of plastic and paper. Do we want this type of pollution all over the countryside?

Very careful consideration of these problems must be undertaken if the countryside is to be protected.

P HARDING
Breamore, Hampshire

False Masons

MR MILLER is not ashamed to admit he is a Freemason (letter, 24 February). Good for him. My problem is that secrecy allows others to claim membership which cannot be checked.

I work with victims of abuse by healthcare professionals, psychiatrists, GPs, psychiatric nurses and so on. When those who have suffered long-term sexual abuse begin to show signs of independence, it is surprising how often they are told, "You won't get anywhere if you try to complain about me. I am a Freemason."

It may be that this is merely a fictitious ploy by people who know to be skilled manipulators; but if there were an open register, at least non-members would not be able to make such a claim.

JEAN ROBINSON
Oxford

Gents in the loo

REPORTING on the MCC vote over exclusion of women (24 February), you list 10 differences between men and women, including: "Women hang toilet paper to curl over at the top of the roll; men have it peeping out from underneath."

I have never known any man replace a loo roll, either curling over or peeping out. Where did you find them? Certainly not in the Long Room.

SUSAN FREEMAN
Hampton Hill, Middlesex

Titanic injustice

THE FILM, *Titanic* gives an unfair portrayal of my grandfather, Bruce Ismay, chairman of the White Star Line. Please allow me to set the record straight.

The film shows Ismay urging Captain Smith to increase speed, in order to gain favourable publicity by arriving in New York ahead of schedule. According to W J Oldham's *The Ismay Line*, quite the reverse is true. Before sailing, Smith received Ismay's instructions, "Under no circumstances whatsoever is the *Titanic* to arrive before 5am on Wednesday morning at the Amherst Light Vessel." This was in line with company policy, which put comfort before speed. Also, it was Ismay's affidavit made to the American inquiry by Mr A H Weikman, barber on the *Titanic*.

After the collision, Ismay worked for nearly two hours helping people into the boats. He only left when, there being no more women in sight on the deck, he was ordered into the last boat, as it was being lowered. This account comes from an affidavit made to the American inquiry by Mr A H Weikman, barber on the *Titanic*.

I believe there should be a code of practice for film-makers, which would enforce adherence to accepted facts. In this instance, Bruce Ismay's character was blackened purely for dramatic effect.

I can write with some authority and, I think, impartiality on this matter, since Bruce Ismay's successor as the chairmanship, Harold Sanderson, was my other grandfather.

ALAN SANDERSON
London W2

Too old for the Dome?

WHAT ABOUT the people, like me, who hope to be 70 in 2000? The contents of the Millennium Dome seem to be for those aged 45 or less. As far as I can see it is not a place I shall visit. This letter comes from my e-mail address – yes, I am an Internet user.

MARY HODGES
Oxford

That millennium – the big stories you wouldn't have thought of in a thousand years



MILES KINGTON

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Pity the rich Swiss – they have to accept their own normality



RUPERT CORNWELL

BERNE – Panic in paradise? Well, not quite. But a visit to Switzerland in early 1998 is a distinctly disconcerting experience. Now the conservative Swiss are not ones to get carried away. But in its sedate fashion the place is in ferment. It's not that BSE has broken out on the scented Alpine pastures, or that poverty beckons for Europe's richest country, still as ruinously expensive as ever. Scratch a little deeper though, and you are amazed. As never before perhaps in the 150 years of the modern state, the assumptions on which Switzerland is based are under challenge. Up in the mountains, the glaciers are retreating in the face of global warming. Down in the plains and valleys, where Switzerland meets the outside world, it is frozen history that is melting. And not before time.

Switzerland is a prisoner of its myth. For the Swiss, theirs has been the land apart, which thanks to its valour, industry and good sense had avoided the traumas that engulfed the rest of Europe. It has seen itself as the purest distillation of independence and neutrality, underpinned by an Athenian system of direct democracy envied by the rest of us. And even if we did. Depression, world wars, cold wars, the birth of a new Europe – come what may, Switzerland sailed serenely onward, rich and contented. No longer. From both the past and the present, the Swiss myth is under siege.

The catalyst of course has been the Nazi-gold controversy. The end of the Cold War, had buried allegations of Swiss collaboration with the Nazis under the greater need to contain the Russians. Periodically, doubts would crop up, even in Switzerland; but basically the myth survived: heroism, not expediency, saved the Swiss from the Third Reich.

Well, Switzerland now learns, not quite. The revelations of dormant accounts, fresh details of how the country was Hitler's financial conduit to the rest of the world and how it turned many Jews away – all erode the way the country regards itself. Not unreasonably, the Swiss are searching around for culprits. Some blame jealous foreigners for exaggerating modest sins into huge iniquities, others blame the banks for their obsession with secrecy and their heartless treatment of Holocaust survivors seeking money hidden by murdered relatives. And of course others blame the Jews. But gradually, one senses, reality is dawning. The country was not an active collaborator of Nazism; indeed it behaved better than either France or Austria, and its role may be compared to that of Sweden. But neither was it perfect.

And the extent of that imperfection will be revealed. The Swiss are nothing if not meticulous. Three separate investigations are underway into the country's behaviour. A first detailed report in April will deal with the gold dealings; the word is that it will be "very critical." Others will follow on the conduct of Swiss

insurance companies, trading in looted art, and more besides. But the broad conclusion is already clear. Entirely surrounded by Axis powers and dependent on outside raw materials, Switzerland did what it had to do – what most others would have done: it compromised.

Now turn history forward half a century. Once more Switzerland is surrounded. This time the encircling takes the more benign shape of the European Union, but again the limits of "independence" are exposed. The Swiss Government is now committed to joining the EU. As Flavio Cotti, who currently holds the rotating presidency of the federation points out, it has scant choice in the matter: "A country remaining outside has to pay the price of isolation." Berne and the EU are presently negotiating a bilateral agreement, which amounts to a pre-accession treaty and which might well founder on a transport dispute. But the sense of the process is clear. Switzerland is in a corner. As in 1939, it must get the best deal it can.

Conceivably, clinging to an imagined independence, the country may yet turn its back on the EU. But even if it does, the new Europe has already undermined that other holy canon of neutrality. Strip away the myth, and you realise neutrality was an instrument to keep Switzerland out of wars between overwhelmingly more powerful neighbours. But today, war between Germany and France is inconceivable. Swiss neutrality in its old fashioned sense is an irrelevance;



in the Cold War the country was taken for granted as part of the West. Now a more humdrum neutrality beckons, like that of Sweden, Austria, or Ireland.

But such a realisation is not a cause for joy. The embrace of Europe is reluctant, born not of idealism but necessity. Already Switzerland must shape its economic laws with one eye on the EU. Full membership implies, perforce, greater centralisation and a weakening of the cherished system of referenda and town hall decision-making. If the Euro succeeds, another symbol of nationhood, the Swiss franc, is also doomed. And even Switzerland's legendary 500,000-strong citizens militia, each with a rifle under the bed, trained to blow up the mountain passes to save the motherland at the first trump of an Alpine horn, may be no more. Save the motherland from whom? There are now proposals for a 10,000 man professional standing army. In this moment of self-questioning, nothing is sacred.

Is this the end of "Swiss-ness"? Of course not – no more than the EU has drained the nationhood from France, Britain or Italy. But for once the expression "turning point" is not a cliché. A senior member of one of the commissions says, "I see us in the UN in five or ten years, and then inside the EU." No more splendid isolation, fewer myths, no more Swiss exceptionalism. Just a small, extremely wealthy country at the very heart of Europe. For most of us, such normality would indeed be paradise. For Switzerland, adjustment to it is a trauma.

Bombs, bullets and hard words: but there still is hope in Ulster

The peace process grinds slowly on but, says David McKittrick, there may yet be a compromise Gerry Adams and David Trimble can live with

IT'S actually something of a mercy that Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam have imposed a time-limit on the Northern Ireland peace process, insisting as they have that the multi-party talks must conclude within a matter of months. There will then be referendums north and south in early May. London and Dublin hope these will endorse a plan for an ambitious new dispensation aimed at transforming Northern Ireland into a more stable and thus ultimately more peaceful state.

This is a mercy partly because it will concentrate the minds of the more fearful politicians who are often tempted to filibuster rather than cut a deal. But it's also a blessing in that it will limit the time available to those intent on using death and destruction to wreck the peace process.

If the past few months are anything to go by, the path to the May referendums will probably be punctuated by acts of violence from the more murderous of Northern Ireland's blizzard of acronyms. The CAC (Continuity Army Council), INLA (Irish National Liberation Army) and LVF (Loyalist Volunteer Force) will all be trying hard. All three of these have already shown their ability to unsettle the process with shootings and bombings; as the May deadline approaches they will try to derail it completely.

Although these are small groups their violence can have powerful effects. The two recent bombings of the Protestant towns of Moira and Portadown, which look to be the work of the CAC, embitter the Unionist community and give its politicians even less room to manoeuvre. They also, especially with the attack on the Orange citadel of Portadown, practically beg groups such as the LVF, which is based there, to hit back. And when they go out and kill Catholics, as they probably will, the republican grassroots will press the IRA to retaliate.

Thus groups which are outside the process can exert an indirect but powerful force on those inside the talks. Thus, too, the whole psychology of the process can be changed. Those Unionists, for example, who are prepared to contemplate a historic new deal involving republicans, look at the ruins of Moira and Portadown and wonder whether the peace process is meaningless. If they believe David Trimble, the bombs were the work of the treacherous IRA; if they believe the RUC, the CAC was responsible. Either way, as they are asked to make a serious and politically costly effort to reach out to the other side, the prospect is that some republicans are going to keep on bombing anyway, settlement or no settlement.



The Orange citadel of Portadown, after Monday's bomb Brian Little/PA

For the exercise to be successful in May, the two governments are going to have to come up with something which was once unthinkable, and which is still a very tall order

logically incompatible, since the first wants to strengthen the union while the latter wants to break it. But there have been tantalising glimpses of some interim settlement, in the here and now rather than the green or Orange utopian mists, that might allow both to co-

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go live with. A couple of years ago the very idea would have been laughed out of court: how on earth, it would be asked, could it be expected that a Unionist and a republican might find common ground?

It is still the case that the ultimate aims of Unionism and republicanism are exist, however uneasily. But it hardly needs to be said that there are an extraordinary number of difficulties to be overcome before this could become reality. For one thing, there are clearly factions on both the republican and Unionist sides who want nothing to do with the talks process.

This opposition is most visible on the Unionist side where the Rev Ian Paisley, who two years ago took more than a third of the Unionist vote, regularly denounces the whole thing. And with four of David Trimble's ten MPs urging him to walk out of the talks one can see why he constantly looks over his shoulder.

The pattern is different on the republican side, but the fact that the IRA carried out two recent killings – sanctioned, by all accounts, by its leaders – shows that not everyone in the republican movement feels that the first priority is to keep Sinn Féin in talks. Somebody in there either wants them out, or is pretty much indifferent on the issue.

The fact that Sinn Féin are undergoing a two-week suspension in the "sinn" bin is a further source of instability. Although Sinn Féin were among the principal architects of the process, many of the republican grassroots, angered by the expulsion, now question the value of a return to talks. They probably will go back in, though not meekly.

The weeks after that should determine whether or not the talks process will or will not work. Most of the main participants will be heading off to Washington for the jollifications and politicking of St Patrick's Day, March 17, after which will come the most crucial period of all. Most involved now agree that they should be spirited away by the two governments, away from the media's questing microphones, for a final intensive negotiating session. By that stage the parties should have in front of them a draft agreement, drawn up perhaps by London and Dublin or perhaps by talks chairman George Mitchell.

This make-or-break session is to be slotted in between St Patrick's Day and Good Friday, which this year falls on April 10. If a deal is struck then, the weeks after Easter will be taken up by the referendum campaigns, with those supporting the new deal attempting to stave off the objections of those opposed to it.

It is unrealistic to expect that all this will take place against a background of peace: CAC, INLA, LVF and so on will see it as their duty to wreck the thing. There might also be splits inside the IRA or within the loyalist organisations involved in the talks, who may find it impossible to swallow the kind of compromises that will be necessary. A glance back shows just how many obstacles are strewn across the path to the referendums. And even after successful referendums, more difficulties will lie ahead as the representatives of traditions who have opposed each other for centuries are called upon to cooperate to make new structures work.

The deaths and political disagreements of recent months have had a dispiriting effect in Belfast, ensuring that the old bitterness remain as jagged as ever. But disillusionment has not yet become despair, and hope is still alive: hope that for all the setbacks things are still moving, however slowly, in a positive direction; hope that all those deadly obstacles may yet be surmounted.

By the waters of the Thames, I sat down and wept ...



DAVID MELLOR

The jumble of ideas revealed for the Dome is a reason for genuine sadness

I AM against the Millennium Dome. It gives me no pleasure to say so, since many of those closely involved in the project are very able, and some, like Michael Grade, very good friends for whom my admiration is almost boundless. Nor do I condemn the Government's enthusiasm for the scheme for base party political reasons. I am merely being consistent. I condemned it when the Conservatives sought stultifyingly to give life to this grotesque white elephant, and must continue to do so now Labour have clasped the wretched creature to their bosom. I heard nothing at the Festival Hall launch on Tuesday to convince me that at a time of real austerity in public expenditure, this is anything other than a lamentable diversion of much needed resources from other far more worthwhile projects.

I am astonished that a government normally so sure-footed in judging the public mood has taken on the uphill task of persuading many millions of sceptics up and down the nation that something to justify the enormous outlay can be created in the time remaining. How ironic to use the Festival Hall when Richard Rogers's genuinely inspired makeover of the South Bank, which has on one site the greatest concentration of arts activities in the world, is being delayed for want of funds. It is surely ridiculous that the South Bank will continue to look like a discarded set from *A Clockwork Orange* through the

millennium and beyond while this fundamentally pointless and purposeless dome flourishes.

The Dome in truth is a lot of money chasing a big idea, and chasing it against a time frame that is becoming impossibly short. There were boasts yesterday about the £60m forthcoming, after much arm twisting, from the private sector. Nothing was said of the £90m still outstanding and which no one seems enthusiastic to contribute. Against a background of bickering, and the obvious lack of a single inspirational figure of genius to give the thing life and value, increasingly desperate attempts are being made to persuade us that the dome will contain enough magic to be *valet le voy-*

age. But to my mind it is an impossible task to turn the jumble of ideas presented on Tuesday into something with the overarching coherence necessary to give the project life.

The celebrations of the millennium went wrong almost as soon as the idea emerged five years ago. It might have been possible then to have started projects of real worth, on a number of sites throughout the nation, to give to posterity buildings that spoke of our age as eloquently as places such as the Houses of Parliament or St Paul's Cathedral speak of theirs. But that was not to be; such ideas were too big for the minds then assembled to bring them to pass. The whole thing deteriorated, first into a des-

perate tangle through the nation for ideas, out of which emerged a series of millennium village hall type projects of unbecomeable bathos, and then, once the great exhibition idea had been fished from the past, yet more wrangling over where the project should be located and who should run it.

Such was the state of things when Labour were elected, that everyone would have understood if they had pulled the plug. But they haven't, and they now face a seriously uphill struggle to rescue their own credibility leave aside the Dome's. I do not gloat over any of this. I just feel desperately sad that when it could all have been so different, it has in fact come to this.



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WHEN they unveiled the artist's view of the Millennium Dome's interior, Pandora immediately thought, "Hold on, haven't I seen this before?" It looked amazingly like the interior of the black glass pyramid Luxor Hotel and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip.



the Luxor. What about the floating "dreamscape" rides? They're not a million miles from the Luxor's own "River Nile" floating boats that cruise around the craps tables and poker

room. We called the New Millennium Exhibition Company and asked spokesman Terrence Gibbons if anyone from Nevada had been involved in the design of the Dome planning. "No, all the designers are from London," he insisted. And was there going to be any gambling in the Dome? "No, this is going to be a wholesome exhibition, aimed at children." Not even a single betting shop or any Lottery scratchcards for sale. "No." How then to build a Vegas casino in Docklands, hailed by Tony Blair as "the most exciting place in the world", but exclude gambling.

And particularly unfair to the nation's punters who, after all, have contributed £399m to the Dome via their lottery bets.

One of the principal corporate sponsors of the Dome, Manpower, the UK's largest employment agency, has pledged £12m to launch the exciting-



named "Work Zone" and the equally fascinating-sounding "Skills Olympics". This generous act of altruism may have something to do with the fact that one of Manpower's fiercest competitors, Reed Employment, enjoys a very friendly relationship with the Government. It's chairman Alec Reed (who donated £100,000 the Labour Party election war-chest) is now a valued consultant to the Government on employment

and educational issues. Moreover, Reed Employment is a lead organization in the "New Deal for the Unemployed". When you think about it, £100,000 looks remarkably cheap compared to £12m.

When Special Branch investigators looking at the infiltration of NF fascists into football hooliganism reported that one of the worst trouble spots appeared to be Brighton and Hove Albion, eyebrows were raised. Apparently entire terraces at Brighton's grounds had been chanting, "Seig Heil! Seig Heil!" Since when had the most famous of all genteel English seaside towns become home to a legion of jackboot-wearing, skin-head racist thugs? Another investigator, this one presumably less acoustically impaired, was dispatched to the scene. His report: the crowd was actually chanting the Brighton team's nickname: "Seagulls! Seagulls!"

Pandora

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Commercial Union's £15bn merger with GA leaves 3,000 UK jobs in jeopardy

By Andrew Verity

Commercial Union and General Accident, two of the UK's largest insurance companies, yesterday attempted to create one of the biggest insurers in Europe with a £15bn merger that will lead to the loss of 3,000 British jobs.

Executives of both companies said the merger would give

CGU, will have a world-wide staff of roughly 53,000. It will be the second biggest general insurer in the UK, after Royal & Sun Alliance, with a market share of 10 per cent, and the fifth biggest life insurer, holding more than 5 per cent of the market.

If shareholders approve the merger, Sir John Carter, chief executive of Commercial Union, will retire in June in favour of Bob Scott, chief executive of General Accident. Pehr Gyllenhammar, currently chairman of CU, will lead a board consisting of four directors from CU and three from GA.

Sir John yesterday said there were significant new opportunities in Europe as private savings and insurance policies were used to top up state protection. "Both companies believe that CGU will be much more strongly positioned to capitalise on these opportunities than either company could on its own," he said.

Unions yesterday gave a tentative welcome to the merger, calling the combined company a "positive force" which could survive in a competitive market. But they warned they would need firm assurances on compulsory redundancies.

Roger Lyons, general secretary of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union, yesterday said: "The MSF will be seeking urgent consultations and agreement with both GA and CU to avoid any involuntary redundancies arising from this proposed merger."

"Financial sector mergers are threatening too many quality jobs and careers and so the MSF will be taking all necessary steps to safeguard the thousands of jobs in Scotland, York, Stevenage and other centres, while seeking to retain a realistic branch network across the UK."



Sir John Carter, chief executive of Commercial Union (left), with Bob Scott, group chief executive of General Accident following the announcement yesterday that the two insurers are to merge

Photograph: FT

Executives said they hoped to shed jobs among the 10 per cent of staff that left the companies each year. But they refused to rule out compulsory redundancies. Directors were unable to specify how many of the group's branches would disappear but said closures would be spread across the UK.

Industry observers expect many of the job losses to fall in

London, while the group keeps slimmed-down operations in Glasgow, York, Dundee and Croydon.

The merger may lead to an improvement in job prospects in Perth, home of GA's head office, where the new group will house its combined general insurance arms, leading to an expansion of its Scottish staff. General insurance makes up the

majority of new business going to both groups.

Mr Scott said the £225m in cost savings would flow from shedding staff, cutting surplus property and by using the same IT systems. IT is the biggest element of capital expenditure at Commercial Union. "It is becoming increasingly complex and increasingly costly to establish IT

systems. Merging these two companies will give us what we need to establish common systems to save on IT costs," Mr Scott said.

The City reacted coolly to the deal and sharply marked down the shares in both companies. CU slipped to 1103p from 1130p while GA dropped by 85 points to 1370p.

Outlook, page 21

Strong GRE results put insurance sector in merger spotlight

By Les Paterson and Andrew Verity

Shares in the insurance sector received a double boost yesterday as merger-mania, on the back of the Commercial Union/General Accident deal, combined with the publication of strong financial results from Prudential and Guardian Royal Exchange.

A 41 per cent profits leap at GRE did little to dampen speculation that the smallest of the composite insurers needed to do a deal to catch up with its competitors. Pre-tax profits soared to £872m, more than expected by most analysts. The company also announced it would return £189m of capital to shareholders, approximately 20.5p per share.

One fund manager said: "Guardian is now the smallest company about. They are going to have to tie up or risk being left on the shelf." GRE is seen by many industry commentators as a prime takeover target. Shares in GRE finished the day up 34.25p at 475p.

Trevor May at Salomon Smith Barney said: "It's quite a respectable performance, although UK motor results were worse than most people were looking for. I was quite pleased to see a return of capital to shareholders."

GRE has traded at a discount to the insurance sector for some time because of its relatively high exposure to the competitive motor insurance market.

Not everyone in the City shared the view that a merger was essential for the insurer. Mr May said: "It's an easy thing to say but it's not as if the

company is completely devoid of strategy. It's big enough to go it alone if it needs to."

Meanwhile, Prudential reported a sharp fall in profits from its UK life insurance business in 1997, a year which has seen it repeatedly pummeled by regulators over its failure to clear up mis-selling of pensions by its sales force.

Profits from long-term saving policies, including endowments, life insurance and pensions, fell by 9 per cent to £570m. Much of the fall was due to a £27m charge in respect of £450m which has been put aside to compensate victims of mis-selling.

The Pru said new business profits - just 3 per cent up on 1996 at £208m - had been hit by lower sales volumes from its sales force. The sales team were taken off the road for a month last summer after regulators raised serious objections to the Pru's compliance with the rules.

The UK results marred an otherwise upbeat year for the Pru which saw operating profits up by 15 per cent to £895m. It announced a rise in dividend of 10.4 per cent to 19.1p per share. Its shares closed up 40p at 934p.

The Pru saw the amount of money it manages across the world grow by one-third to £119bn as it integrated its biggest acquisition of last year, Scottish Amicable.

The Pru also made strides in the telebanking market, where policyholders put £90m of fund into the company's new banking subsidiary. Last week, it announced it was opening a new call centre in Derby which will employ 1,500 new staff.

Standard denies board split on independence

By Les Paterson

Standard Chartered, the international bank, yesterday denied its board was split on the question of independence.

Speaking at a presentation of the bank's annual results, Patrick Gillam, Standard's chairman, said the board was committed to the strategy of independence. "This is the unanimous view of the Standard Chartered board," he said. Malcolm Williamson, the chief executive, added, "And I can confirm that."

Recent reports had suggested Mr Williamson had made merger overtures to Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays. In contrast, Mr Gillam was reported to be in favour of independence.

Earlier this week, Standard Chartered issued a statement denying it was in merger talks. This followed weekend press reports that Mr Taylor and Mr Williamson discussed the possibility of a merger over dinner in an exclusive London restaurant.

There is still dispute between sources at the banks, however, about who broached the subject of a merger with whom. Sources at Standard Chartered have categorically denied that Mr Williamson brought up the possibility of a link-up. Sources close to Mr Taylor have suggested that the conversation was "not completely one-sided".

Standard Chartered shares finished the day up 124p at 882p. Analysts said the share price rise was due partly to the better-than-expected results and partly to the continued hope in some parts of the City that Standard Chartered could still forge links with a UK banking rival.

Headline pre-tax profits at the bank were flat at £870m, largely because of sizeable provisions for bad debts in Asia. However, analysts were cheered by the strong underlying profit growth, by hints of future acquisitions in the Middle East and in Asia, and by the bank's apparently prudent approach to the Asian crisis.

The bank made specific provisions for the crisis of £201m in 1997. It also added £100m to its general, unspecified debt provisions.

Tim Sykes, analyst at Credit Suisse First Boston, said: "They understand their market and their business mix is very focused on certain areas, like trade finance and consumer lending."

Peter Wood, finance director, said the bank had only lost money on foreign exchange on one day last year. That was on 2 July, the day when the Thai baht devalued.

Mr Gillam said: "Our 1997 results demonstrate our capacity to produce excellent results when our main markets in Asia are suffering considerable turmoil."

First Leisure investors poised for revolt over Grade's pay

By Andrew Yates

A shareholder revolt is brewing at First Leisure, the bingo to bowling group, over Michael Grade's controversial pay package. The former head of Channel 4 joined the company as chairman last summer and stands to receive more than £4.5m over the next four years.

Institutional shareholders are also angry at the £79,000 paid to

Michael Payne, First Leisure's managing director, to extend his contract from one to three years, in direct conflict with corporate governance guidelines.

Institutions may seek to block the introduction of Mr Grade's new long term incentive plan. Several large shareholders are also threatening to vote against the re-election of three of the group's directors unless First Leisure comes up with satisfactory answers to their grievances.

Joe Bolam, David Ducks and John Woolf, who all sit on the remuneration committee that agreed the payouts, could face opposition to their re-appointment at the group's AGM on March 17.

One fund manager said: "We are seeking clarification on the reason for these payments. This is far from over and the agm will be the focal point for concerns from shareholders."

Institutions have raised concerns over Lord Rayne and Robbie Rayne, the father and son team that sits on the remuneration committee. They are both directors and substantial shareholders of London Merchant Securities, the property group which was an original shareholder in First Leisure and which still has a major stake in the group. Another institutional shareholder said:

"Their attitude to best corporate practice looks suspect."

Mr Grade's pay is £510,000 a year, well in excess of the £450,000 he earned as head of Channel 4. He is also entitled to a bonus for achieving a growth in the group's earnings per share and share price of just 2 per cent over and above the rate of inflation. The maximum payout under the scheme is £625,000 a year if Mr Grade can achieve 6 per cent growth.

First Leisure tried to play down the extent of shareholder worries yesterday. Graham Cokes, the group's finance director, said: "The institutions have not expressed any concerns to us. The performance criteria that Mr Grade has to meet are tougher than those of John Cusack [the group's former chief executive]."

First Leisure shares have underperformed the market by more than 30 per cent in the last 12 months.

EMI in succession crisis as Fifield threatens to quit

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Jim Fifield, the head of EMI's music division, is said to be furious with the group's board after it blocked his appointment as chief executive last Friday. Sources close to EMI Music in New York say Mr Fifield is deeply unhappy at not getting the job he wanted and the way the issue was handled.

With EMI now looking for a new chief executive Mr Fifield will not stay at the group beyond the expiry of his contract next March. He may leave well before then if the company agrees to buy him out.

Mr Fifield, known as "Lucky Jim" because of his lavish remuneration, was the front runner for the position and most observers had expected him to be named as chief executive as Sir Colin Southgate, chairman, had

expressed an interest in stepping back to a non-executive role.

But the board could not agree on the way the role would be defined and Sir Colin will now stay on as chairman. Mr Fifield had wanted free rein with Sir Colin having only limited input on a non-executive basis. EMI has denied that the decision was related to boardroom concerns over Mr Fifield's pay demands.

With Mr Fifield ruled out, City analysts now expect the top job to go to an external candidate. Ken Berry, who runs EMI's record labels, was once considered a possibility but he is staying in his current position. He will continue the restructuring of the group's operations which have been hit by sluggish sales and the impact of the financial crisis in Asia.

Mr Berry, who was born in the UK but lives in California, has attracted criticism for pro-

moting Nancy, his American wife, from an executive position in charge of "special projects" to the more senior post of vice chairman of Virgin Group Records last September. There have been reports of management unrest at the group with some saying Ms Berry treats subordinates poorly.

Ms Berry, 39, earned her stripes with her part in signing the top-selling Spice Girls for EMI. But things have not gone so well recently with artists such as Janet Jackson and David Bowie failing to deliver high sales.

There has also been disquiet over Ms Berry's high-octane lifestyle which is said to include lavish parties at the couple's Bel Air mansion and friendships with rock stars. There has been speculation that the Berrys' high-living and high-profile lifestyle was causing tension between Ken Berry and Sir Colin Southgate.



Ken Berry: Formerly tipped for top job at EMI

Waterstone admits rival buyer may foil £300m WH Smith deal

Tim Waterstone, the book-selling entrepreneur, admitted yesterday that a rival buyer could launch a higher bid for Waterstone's and scupper his £300m deal with WH Smith.

Barnes & Noble, a big US book retailer, is keen to expand in the UK and last year sent a team of executives to scout the country for suitable sites. It could still enter the fray as the Waterstone's requires approval from WH Smith shareholders.

"It is possible but I don't think they want to come in too fast into the market," Mr Waterstone said. "They've had their chance to look at it."

WH Smith said it did not expect a counter bid but would look at any significantly higher offer in the interests of shareholder value. A spokesman said: "If someone offered £350m, you'd have to look at it wouldn't you?"

Mr Waterstone is investing £6m in the new company that is buying Waterstone's as well as HMV music and Dillons book stores from EMI. This will give him 4.5 per cent of the new company which will be called RMV Media Group. The other directors, including Alan Giles, the chief executive of Waterstone's and Stuart McAllister of HMV, will invest similar sums giving management an initial 9 per cent stake in business. The deal values HMV and Dillons at £500m. EMI will receive a minimum cash consideration of £362.5m for HMV, plus further payments of £50m.

Mr Waterstone will be chairman of the new company and work full-time. His Daisy & Tom children's shops will become part of the group at a later stage. The company will be valued at around £12m.

Waterstone returns, page 3

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5745.10	94.10	1.67	5793.20	4189.10	3.13
FTSE 250	5071.80	29.90	0.59	5049.40	4384.20	3.06
FTSE 350	2735.20	39.60	1.47	2751.00	2075.70	3.12
FTSE All Share	2692.56	36.85	1.39	2678.33	2068.07	3.10
FTSE Smallcap	2447.70	5.40	0.22	2446.40	2162.10	2.82
FTSE Technology	1311.80	6.80	0.52	1348.50	1225.20	3.24
FTSE AIM	1008.20	2.20	0.22	1135.50	895.90	0.95
Dow Jones	8441.34	70.25	0.84	8451.81	6358.79	1.85
Nikkei	18360.64	152.64	1.00	20510.79	14488.21	0.93
Hang Seng	10886.74	203.40	1.90	18820.31	7909.13	3.57
Dax	4636.82	36.28	0.79	4983.78	3192.33	1.65

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling 	UK 10 year gilt 	US long bond 																																													
Money Market Rates <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>3 month</th> <th>1 year</th> <th>1 yr chg</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>UK</td> <td>7.56</td> <td>7.54</td> <td>0.86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>US</td> <td>5.67</td> <td>5.60</td> <td>0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Japan</td> <td>0.84</td> <td>0.74</td> <td>0.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Germany</td> <td>3.52</td> <td>0.29</td> <td>3.76</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		3 month	1 year	1 yr chg	UK	7.56	7.54	0.86	US	5.67	5.60	0.00	Japan	0.84	0.74	0.21	Germany	3.52	0.29	3.76	Bond Yields % p.a. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>1 year</th> <th>1 yr chg</th> <th>Long bond</th> <th>1 yr chg</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>UK</td> <td>5.67</td> <td>-0.11</td> <td>5.87</td> <td>-0.78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>US</td> <td>5.67</td> <td>0.75</td> <td>5.94</td> <td>-1.32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Japan</td> <td>0.84</td> <td>-0.68</td> <td>2.52</td> <td>-0.84</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Germany</td> <td>3.52</td> <td>0.95</td> <td>5.50</td> <td>-0.83</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			1 year	1 yr chg	Long bond	1 yr chg	UK	5.67	-0.11	5.87	-0.78	US	5.67	0.75	5.94	-1.32	Japan	0.84	-0.68	2.52	-0.84	Germany	3.52	0.95	5.50	-0.83
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MAIN PRICE CHANGES				
Rises	Price 01	Chg 01	% Chg	Falls
Cover bonds	331.80	59.50	21.82	Southam
Standard Char	877.50	119.50	15.77	Bloomin' Blue
Logica	1365.00	132.50	10.75	Southern Elec
Gen Accident	473.75	33.00	7.49	Gen Accident
				Balmain
				146.25
				-6.25
				-4.05

CURRENCIES

\$/\$				DM/\$				¥/\$			
1.650	1.600	1.550	1.500	2.000	1.500	1.000	500	250	200	150	100
1.6405	1.6325	1.6250	1.6175	1.5325	1.5250	1.5175	1.5125	161.20	160.50	160.00	159.50
at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago		at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago		at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	
Dollar	1.6405	-0.03c	1.6325	Starting	0.8073	+0.01p	0.8126	Starting	0.8073	+0.01p	0.8126
D-Mark	2.9821	+1.76p	2.7373	0-Mark	1.8116	+1.10p	1.6768	0-Mark	1.8116	+1.10p	1.6768
Yen	211.86	+¥0.80	198.79	Yen	128.52	+¥0.46	121.55	Yen	128.52	+¥0.46	121.55
Index	105.20	+0.40	98.00	S index	108.90	+0.40	103.25	S index	108.90	+0.40	103.25

OTHER INDICATORS			
at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	at 5pm
Brown Oil (\$)	13.28	0.18	19.97
Gold (\$)	291.75	0.25	354.25
Silver (\$)	6.34	-0.05	5.19

Bloomberg.com/uk				Bloomberg			
at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	at 5pm	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	at 5pm
GBP	114.30	3.00	119.97	GBP	114.30	3.00	119.97
Base Rates	7.25	6.00	Base Rates	7.25	6.00	Base Rates	7.25

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.4033	Italy (lira)	2.856
Austria (schillings)	20.23	Japan (yen)	207.32
Belgium (francs)	59.40	Malta (lira)	0.6276
Canada (\$)	2.2890	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2420
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8416	Norway (kroner)	12.11
Denmark (kroner)	11.04	Portugal (escudos)	293.28
Finland (markka)	8.8044	Spain (pesetas)	245.19
France (francs)	9.6464	South Africa (rand)	7.8088
Germany (marks)	2.8860	Sweden (kroner)	12.88
Greece (drachmas)	456.18	Switzerland (francs)	2.3371
Hong Kong (\$)	12.40	Turkey (lira)	362.234
Ireland (pounds)	1.541	USA (\$)	1.621

Source: Thomson Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

هذا من الادل

ong GRE results
insurance sector
merger spotlight



OUTLOOK ON THE INSURANCE MERGER, THE OPTIONS FOR GLAXO AND SMITHKLINE, AND THE PROBLEMS FACING EMI

GRE proves that consolidation isn't the only way

Phew! That's a relief. For a moment there it looked as if all that fevered stock market speculation about consolidation in financial services was going to come to nought. Now someone's finally gone and done one. No matter that it was dull, boring and predictable. Commercial Union and General Accident have taken the plunge and others must surely follow.

Assuming their respective bosses don't do a Richard Sykes, 3,000 people will find themselves out of a job and those fine old names will disappear behind the suitably anonymous sounding initials, CGU. Well anything's better than Commercial Accident, isn't it? As a sop to the tartan lobby, general insurance is to be based in General Accident's home town of Perth, but the head office comes to London as usual - so much more handy for the globe trotting aspirations of the new model CGU executive.

It's easy to be cynical. To be fair, it's also hard to fault the industrial logic of this merger. The moment Sun Alliance and Royal Insurance got together, the pressure was on Commercial Union and General Accident to respond. CU is known to have flirted with alternatives, notably the collective insurance interests of BAT Industries, but for reasons never explained, those talks fell through at the eleventh hour. General Accident seemed the natural partner after that. Its chief executive, Bob Scott, a no nonsense Australian, also provides a solution to the succession problem at Commercial Union. But it doesn't have to be this way. Round at Guardian Royal Exchange, John Robins doggedly sticks to ploughing

an independent furrow, refusing to contemplate all the many offers he must have had to merge or be taken over. Judging by yesterday's reported 40 per cent leap in profits and a promised £189m buyback, the approach is beginning to work like a dream. Under Mr Robins, Guardian Royal has been almost wholly reconstructed. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, GRE has played to its strengths, growing rapidly in direct insurance, private health insurance and various other specialist areas of the market.

The rush to consolidation isn't everyone's cup of tea, nor, as Mr Robins is proving, is it necessarily the best route to corporate success.

Living with visionaries

Hostile takeover bids rarely deliver value to shareholders in the company doing the bidding. This is well researched and well known. Because the acquirer is forced to pay a premium for his target, most if not all the value created by the merger tends to get eaten up by the acquirer.

Most managements have taken this truism on board, and despite the best endeavours of investment bankers, whose fees rise exponentially when a transaction goes hostile, tend as to avoid contested takeovers wherever possible. Merger mania these days is characterised not by the swashbuckling, financially engineered takeover battles of

the 1980s, but by agreed, no premium strategic get togethers.

All of which would make it very difficult for Glaxo Wellcome to go hostile against SmithKline Beecham, as some in the City are urging it to. If Glaxo was forced to pay a bid premium, it might end up giving all the benefits of the merger away to SmithKline Beecham shareholders. There would be nothing left in it for Glaxo. On the now unagreed "friendly" merger terms, for instance, a premium of just 10 per cent would be worth £5bn. A more usual bid premium of 20 per cent would mean £10bn of extra value going to SmithKline Beecham shareholders.

Glaxo doesn't employ Sir Richard Sykes for him to work for SmithKline shareholders. Plainly it wouldn't be worth his while to go this route. There might, however, be another way of salvaging the £13bn of value that was wiped from the two companies' share prices when the merger talks collapsed, and that would be for Glaxo to go hostile with the original no premium bid terms.

If this is as good a merger for both companies as the City seems to think, why not just allow Glaxo to takeover SmithKline on the original terms, sack Jan Leschly and his team, and let Sir Richard inject his own managers and culture through the SmithKline organisation. With one bound, the issue of who runs the show, if that were the problem, would be solved.

Such an outcome would not on the face of it be any less value to SmithKline shareholders than the originally agreed terms. The obvious riposte to this is that Mr Leschly

would fight it, or find a white knight prepared to bid more. But if Mr Leschly can demonstrate that there is more value in alternatives, then he should never have agreed the Glaxo merger terms in the first place.

The logic suggests that Glaxo is in with a chance - that it could go hostile on a no premium basis and still hope to win. This, however, is not what is going to happen. The argument may be intellectually sound, but in the real world it doesn't work that way. And there are good reasons why it doesn't. The chief executive can never be the whole company in large successful organisations like Glaxo and SmithKline, but he is a vital part of it. It is his (or very occasionally her) competitive instinct and vision that drive it forward.

Investors cannot expect successful managements just to stand aside and let their tumblers be tickled just for the sake of supposed shareholder value. Until the world is run by machines, personal and cultural incompatibility are always going to stand in the way of mergers, however compelling their industrial logic. Nor in the end would investors have it any other way. For without these mad, driven, usually autocratic visionaries, their companies would be nothing.

EMI's husband and wife soap opera

Ken and Nancy Berry lead colourful lives on behalf of EMI over in the US of A. Late night parties at Los Angeles' Opium

Den, visits to the Vault, one of New York's flashiest clubs, nipping backstage to hobnob with U2 and offering their Bel Air home as a crash-pad for itinerant rock stars. These are just some of the chores that fill up their working day.

But that, as they say, is rock'n'roll. The question is how much longer the rather more sedate Sir Colin Southgate and the rest of the EMI board are inclined to put up with it. As President of EMI Recorded Music, Mr Berry is one of the most powerful stars in the EMI firmament and one of the executives identified only last May by Sir Colin as "the next generation of management".

He is also an ally of his direct boss, "Lucky" Jim Fiffeld, who until last Friday looked assured of taking over the helm from Sir Colin and then handing it on in four years time to Mr Berry. Sir Colin's decision to deprive Lucky of his prize has created a crisis of succession at EMI. If not Mr Fiffeld and his protégé, then who?

This would be bad news at any time. But with a company that has performed as abysmally as EMI since demerger, its shares having fallen by more than a third, it could be terminal. Before the demerger, EMI was tipped to be taken out at an astronomical premium. Now it is beginning to look as if it is its star band, The Spice Girls, who incidentally, also got their first big break on the Berry's Bel Air patio. Sir Peter Walters and Sir Graham Day, two of EMI's non-executive knights, may not be hip with the beat like Jim, Ken and Nancy. But unless they persuade Sir Colin to skip to it and sort out the management succession, he and EMI are toast.

Oftel ready to appoint successor to Cruickshank

By Michael Harrison

A SHORTLIST of four candidates, consisting of two academics, one consumer watchdog and a senior civil servant, has been drawn up for the top job at Oftel, the telecommunications regulator.

Don Cruickshank is quitting the £138,000-a-year post at the end of March and the appointment of a successor is thought to be close.

The four candidates are Sue Slipman, director of the Gas Consumers Council, Dermot Glynn, former head of National Economic Research Associates in the UK, Martin Cave, Professor of Economics at Brunel University and an adviser to Oftel, and Jim Norton, chief executive of the Government's Radio Communications Agency.

Mr Cruickshank's successor will join Oftel at an important moment with the Government about to unveil a wide-ranging shake-up of utility regulation.

It is also preparing to issue a discussion paper in the next month examining whether Oftel's functions should be incorporated into a wider regulator body encompassing the whole field of communications, including media.

Ms Slipman has raised the profile of the Gas Consumers Council since arriving in October 1996 and would be well qualified to carry through the Government's objective of making consumer interests a priority for each of the regulators. But there are question marks over her experience of regulation and business.

Mr Glynn founded the UK arm of Nera in 1985 but left just before Christmas after a dispute with the consultancy's American owners. He has now set up a new consultancy called European Economic Research.

Mr Norton has worked at both BT and Cable & Wireless, where he was a regional manager and then general manager responsible for business



Oftel succession: (clockwise from top left) Don Cruickshank, who is leaving the top job, and shortlisted candidates Jim Norton, Dermot Glynn and Sue Slipman

development. In his current job he is responsible for allocating the radio spectrum.

Mr Cave has advised Oftel for a number of years on economics, fair trading issues and price controls, including the

latest BT price formula. He is also vice-principal of Brunel and a member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and has advised other regulators including Ofgas and the Brussels competition authority DGIV.

Mr Cruickshank completes his five year stint as director general of telecommunications at the end of next month. He has taken up the part-time post as chairman of the Prime Minister's Millennium Bug campaign but is looking for a full-time job in the private sector.

Mr Cruickshank is due to give evidence next month to the Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, setting out his view on the future of regulation.

Weather evaporates £244m of BG profits

By Michael Harrison

BG, the demerged pipeline arm of British Gas, warned yesterday that global warming could have serious ramifications for the health of its shareholders as its profits wilted in the unseasonably warm weather.

The company's 19 million domestic customers turned down the central heating in their droves as the thermometer went up, punching a £244m hole in operating profits last year.

The impact of the warm weather was made worse by price cuts introduced on 1 October which reduced revenues at its pipeline arm Transco

by a further £130m. In the final quarter of the year Transco's operating profits slumped by 45 per cent to £253m.

However, cost reductions in the main gas business and a £170m turnaround in BG's exploration and production arm more than compensated to leave 1997 operating profits £127m higher at £1.148bn.

David Varney, BG's chief executive, described last year's warm weather as "a big surprise and disappointment", but added that it was a cyclical fluctuation.

The company had not abandoned its long-term view of weather patterns and said global warming could only be

measured in fractions of degrees.

The new price curbs, under which BG's pipeline charges are falling by 13 per cent, will wipe £400m from revenues this year. BG will also have the additional costs, currently running at £200m a year, of preparing its network for full competition in the domestic gas market this year.

Disposals during the year raised £811m from which BG netted a £288m profit and further asset and property sales this year are set to bring the total raised to well over £1bn. Staff cuts are expected to yield a further £50m in savings this year on top of the £48m

achieved last year. BG is reducing the 16,000 strong workforce by 2,500 and has so far identified 700 job cuts.

Mr Varney indicated BG had further scope for share buybacks following the £1.3bn share repurchase completed last year. But he said the company would wait to see the Government's Green Paper on utility regulation, due out next month, before deciding whether to change its capital structure further.

BG has authority to buy back another 10 per cent of its capital which, at last night's closing price of 310p, down 13.5p, would cost it another £1.3bn.

Government plans super-regulatory panel for utilities

The Government is proposing to set up a supervisory panel for the utilities, reporting direct to ministers and overseeing the work of the individual regulators for the gas, telecoms, electricity and water industries, writes Michael Harrison. The proposal is contained in the Green Paper on utility regulation, due to be published by the President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, next month.

The panel would be comprised of representatives from the regulatory bodies, civil servants and members of the "great and the good" according to one senior regulatory source.

The aim behind the panel is to bring greater consistency to the way the regulators - Ofgas, Ofwat and Ofgem - deal with their respective industries. Mrs Beckett is also understood to favour replacing the individual regulators with regulatory commissions, to remove personality clashes from their dealings with privatised utilities such as BT, British Gas and the regional water and electricity companies. However, it is not clear whether this will be made a firm proposal in the discussion document. The paper is expected to canvass some type of formula for taxing or capping what are deemed to be "excess" profits at the utilities.

Courtaulds shares soar on three-way-split plan

By Andrew Yates

COURTAULDS, the troubled chemicals to coatings group, yesterday announced plans to split itself into three in response to a collapse in its market value. The break up plans caused its shares to leap more than 27 per cent to 331p.

The news came as Courtaulds announced 500 job losses at its fibres and chemicals business in Coventry and Derby in an effort to improve margins which have been hit by the strength of the pound.

Courtaulds plans to demerge its coatings and sealants business, which is a world leader in the marine and aerospace industries, within the next few months. The group has also put its poly-

Courtaulds will be left as a pure chemicals and fibres group, producing acrylic and viscose as well as Tenel, the first man made fibre to be invented for 30 years.

Gordon Campbell, chief executive of Courtaulds, said: "The world and his wife were telling me that the sum of our parts were worth more than the whole. On a personal note there is an element of disappointment. In my 18 months as chief executive I have tried to pull things together but at the end of the day this is about shareholder value."

Courtaulds has been beset by problems over the last few years. The strength of the pound has hit profits and the economic turmoil in Asia has hampered sales of Tenel.

Bulmers warns on profits after fall in Christmas sales

By Andrew Yates

THE beleaguered cider industry was dealt a fresh blow yesterday after HP Bulmer, the UK's biggest cider maker, admitted that Christmas sales had fallen sharply. Shares in the group tumbled 96p to 310p after the group warned that profits for the current financial year are likely to be around 25 per cent lower than the £29.3m it made in the year to April 1997.

Bulmer blamed a flood of cheap beer lager imported by supermarkets over Christmas which seduced drinkers away from cider. The strength of the pound and lower duty rates on the continent have tempted the likes of Asda, Tesco and Sainsbury to look overseas for cheap beer which they have

bought over to Britain in huge quantities.

John Rudgard, chief executive of Bulmer, said: "It is the first time I can ever remember that beer was cheaper than cider at Christmas. A litre of beer was selling for 70p while a bottle of Strongbow was selling for £1.30."

Bulmer also made the mistake of increasing the price of White Lightning, its strong cider brand. It was forced to make an embarrassing U-turn and slash prices again after volumes collapsed as rivals chopped their own prices.

Last year was an annus horribilis for the cider industry. Bulmer's shares have collapsed from a peak of 626p and its present woes come in the wake of a profit warning from Matthew Clark.

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£10 Conran lunch

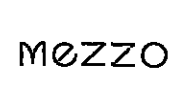
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The offer is available 7 days a week at all six restaurants
* Closed from 6pm on Sunday Offer not available after 6pm on February 14

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

The break-up value of Courtaulds

THESE DAYS the City resounds with cries for "shareholder value", so it was only a matter of time before Courtaulds did the decent thing and decided to break itself up. Over the last five years the coating to chemicals group has underperformed the market by almost 80 per cent. With few signs of things getting any better, the case for a demerger was hard to ignore.

The important question now is how to value the separate businesses.

The coatings and sealants business is Courtaulds' star performer. A world leader in the marine and aerospace markets, the division has sales of just under £1bn a year and makes an operating profit approaching £100m.

Putting it on a similar rating to international rivals, it is probably worth anywhere from £1bn to £1.3bn. Courtaulds already claims it has had a flurry of interest from bankers for the polymers division which has put up for sale.

In a competitive auction the group could get a price at the top of the £200m

to £300m range the City is predicting. The tricky part comes in assessing the value of the chemicals and fibre business and in particular Tencel, the "wonder" fibre that so far has had a less than wonderful impact on profits.

Courtaulds has poured £300m into developing Tencel but the economic crisis in Asia has caused sales to collapse and the business is losing money. Tencel could eventually come good. It certainly has competitive advantages over other fibres, the potential market is huge and competition is still limited.

However sales in Asia are likely to remain poor for the next six months at least. If you throw in Tencel for free, the chemicals and fibres division, with annual sales of £875m, is still worth at least £400m.

Adding all that up and knocking off £430m of debt, Courtaulds is worth, say, from 325p to 350p a share, compared to a closing share price of 331p, up 59.5p on the day.

But the final break-up value could be much higher. Predators must already be circling the coating and sealants division and may strike before the business is floated. Courtaulds shares still look reasonable value.

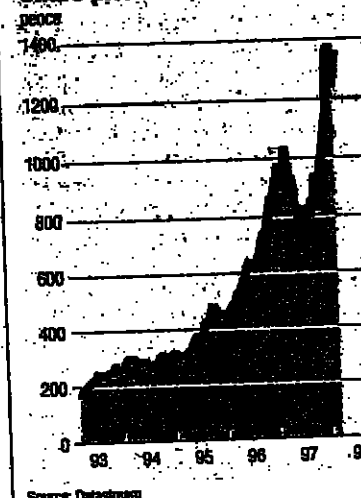
Logica: At a glance

Market value: £395m, share price 1342.5p (+110p)

Trading record 1996 1997

	1996	1997
Turnover (£m)	148	216
Pre-tax profits (£m)	10.8	15.5
Earnings per share (p)	11.4	16.0
Dividends per share (p)	3.6	4.5

Share price



Logica allays investors' fears

INVESTORS who sold Logica shares at the time of the information technology group's profit warning last June must be kicking themselves. Since touching a low of 674p they have doubled in value. Judging by yesterday's interim results, which showed profits rising by 46 per cent to £15.5m in the half year to December, that rise is fully justified. Investors were so impressed they pushed up Logica shares by a further 132.5p to 1365p.

The key to Logica's success is increasing sales faster than its payroll. Last year's warning was prompted by a recruitment shortfall, which raised fears that the company's growth would be restrained by skills shortages. Those worries now look overblown. Revenues increased by 46 per cent on staff numbers up by about a third.

Chief executive Martin Read waxed lyrical about his strategy of aiming the company at three key markets - finance, telecoms and utilities - while concentrating on projects which can be repeated several times over in different countries. So, for example, Logica is selling systems developed for the UK electricity industry - especially those designed to cope with competition in the domestic electricity market - to utilities in the US.

Acquisitions chipped in profits of

£1.66m on sales of £18.3m. The French business, which gives Logica a customer base it can sell its services to, has low margins but they are improving. And Aldison, the telecom software supplier Logica bought last year, lifted revenues by 61 per cent even though it has yet to reap the benefits of cross-selling to Logica's existing customer base. Further deals, especially in the US, are a priority going forward.

Despite their meteoric rise, Logica shares still trade at a discount to other groups such as Sema and CMG. Upgraded forecasts predict full-year profits of about £40m - a forward p/e ratio of 34. Still, at these heady levels, other companies' ratings are more likely to fall than Logica's is to rise. A solid hold.

Wickes is back from the brink

FOR A company that was on the brink of extinction 18 months ago, Wickes has had a remarkable run. Shares in the DIY retailer have almost doubled over the past year, closing up a further 4p at 300p yesterday on the back of a return to profitability and the first dividend payment for two-and-a-half years.

Wickes has been helped by a recovering housing market but its perfor-

mance has still been impressive. Its gross margins have improved from 28.2 per cent to 30.3 per cent over the year while like-for-like sales rose by 10.2 per cent, increasing to 18 per cent in current trading.

The stores have enjoyed a recent boost by the warmer weather which has coaxed out more DIY enthusiasts than at this time last year but Wickes is still performing ahead of the industry average.

The shape of the business is now more simple, with the last of the non-UK businesses sold last year. The £16m loss on the sale of continental European operations pushed the group £6.4m into the red in the year to 31 December. But profits from continuing operations improved from a £37m loss to a £12m profit.

The company is still doing well at the heavy end of the DIY market but feels it is missing out in the decorative sector. To address this it is testing refits in six stores that will stock an additional 500 lines in all coverings and floorings to grab a little market share. This risks fighting on the home ground of rivals such as Homebase and B&Q but if the trial is successful the concept will be rolled out across the estate.

On upgraded profit forecasts of £25m this year, the shares trade on a forward rating of 13 if a full tax is assumed. With a bid still possible the shares look decent value.

Bradford & Bingley pricing aims to keep banks at bay

Bradford & Bingley building society yesterday said it would maintain a pricing approach which would save its members £105-110m in 1998. John Smith, Bradford & Bingley's finance director, said the society would maintain a £2m-a-week rewards scheme. "We are confident that throughout 1998 we can maintain that permanent differential," Mr Smith said of the society's savings and borrowings rates relative to those of the banks. Bradford & Bingley reported an increase in pre-tax profits for 1997 to £93.9m from £88m.

Vardon reveals £125m plan

Vardon, the leisure group that owns the Sea Life and London Dungeon attractions, yesterday unveiled an ambitious £125m investment programme rapidly to expand its health and fitness business over the next three years. It is also looking to open attractions in Europe, including new Dungeons in Edinburgh and another in Holland or Germany. To help fund the investment Vardon sold its Parkdean Holidays business to Rank Group for about £35m. This follows the sale of its bingo operations late last year. It also reported pre-tax profits - after an exceptional charge of £3.7m relating to the bingo disposal - for 1997 of £12.3m, up from £12.1m.

Générale moves into media

Générale des Eaux, the French water and construction conglomerate, yesterday confirmed plans to move into media through an alliance with Havas, the advertising and publishing group in which it took a 30 per cent stake last year. The two companies will discuss the deal at separate board meetings on 9 March, though Générale said the terms of any agreement - which is likely to involve shares and cash - would be based on Tuesday's closing share prices.

Ryanair to launch six routes

Low-cost airline Ryanair is to start low-fare scheduled services on six new routes this summer. The routes are from London Stansted to the three Italian destinations of Venice, Pisa and Rimini, two French routes to Carcassonne/Toulouse and St Etienne/Lyon, and to Kristianstad/Malmö in Sweden. Ryanair said the new services would increase its network to 26 routes and reduce dependence on the Irish market. It said its fares would reduce the cost of travel to the new destinations by up to 80 per cent.

Wickes restores dividend

Wickes, the home improvement retailer, said yesterday its current year had started well, with like-for-like sales up 18 per cent. The firm, which was hit by an accounting scandal, reported a return to profit of £9.5m last year, before tax and a goodwill write off of £16m relating to disposals. It proposed a dividend of 2p a share. Bill Grimsey, the chief executive who took over after the accounting débâcle, said strong cash flow had enabled the repayment of the firm's debt and to restore a dividend, last paid in 1995.

Radamec slips over inquiry

Shares in Radamec Group plunged 29p to 57p after it said an apparent understatement of the cost of sales in one of its subsidiaries has come to light, which it said might have a negative impact on pre-tax profit in the region of £900,000. "This is being urgently investigated by the company and its auditors and a further announcement will be made as soon as possible," the electronics equipment company said.

Shanks buys in Belgium

Shanks & McEwan, the waste management company, is buying four Belgian waste management firms wholly or partly owned by French firm Sita for £67.2m. Shanks & McEwan plans to raise at least £24m to help finance the purchase through a placing of 15 million new ordinary shares at not less than 160p per share. It expects the acquisition to enhance earnings immediately.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
BWD Securities (F)	18.25m (15.97m)	3.3m (2.9m)	11.1p (8.6p)	7.5p (6.0p)
Comstock Hunter (F)	85.75m (50.71m)	9.6m (8.0m)	18.0p (16.2p)	7.92p (7.20p)
Finland (F)	176.1m (167.2m)	14.5m (7.1m)	12.0p (9.9p)	2.7p (2.2p)
GRE (F)	- (-)	872.0m (618.0m)	85.5p (45.9p)	*7.9p
Inveresk (F)	130.8m (148.0m)	5.20m (2.50m)	7.0p (2.5p)	5.79p (5.79p)
Jacques Vert (F)	19.5m (23.3m)	-2.5m (-4.8m)	-18.1p (-48.5p)	nil
Lincot (F)	12.2m (12.5m)	2.5m (1.6m)	18.2p (10.3p)	3.0p (3.20p)
Lynx (F)	216.2m (147.9m)	15.5m (10.8m)	16.0p (11.4p)	4.3p
Parky (F)	202.1m (182.1m)	13.5m (10.1m)	20.9p (15.8p)	3.4p (2.8p)
Praxair (F)	- (-)	1.17m (1.61m)	43.3p (73.4p)	18.1p (17.3p)
RPS Group (F)	20.5m (18.5m)	3.0m (3.0m)	12.2p (10.0p)	4.0p (4.0p)
Hyland Group (F)**	499.6m (374.4)	6.1m (4.3m)	13.8p (9.37p)	4.4p
Southe (F)	18.5m (16.5m)	-20.7m (-19.1m)	-26.0p (-25.0p)	nil
Standard Charter (F)	- (-)	870.0m (870.0m)	81.7p (56.5p)	nil
Terry Lee (F)	8.54m (7.86m)	-0.519m (-1.16m)	-3.4p (-6.8p)	18.5p (14.5p)
Frank Usher (F)	11.6m (10.5m)	1.0m (1.1m)	9.4p (7.7p)	4.0p (4.0p)
Verdon (F)	57.0m (77.4m)	12.3m (12.1m)	6.1p (8.0p)	2.4p (1.3p)
Verity Group (F)	14.0m (23.6m)	-2.0m (-1.4m)	-0.9p (-0.6p)	nil
Wickes (F)	554.0m (584.9m)	-6.5m (-55.7m)	-9.1p (-136.5p)	2.0p

(F) - Final (F) - interim *Dividend to be paid as a PD **Comparative figures are pro forma

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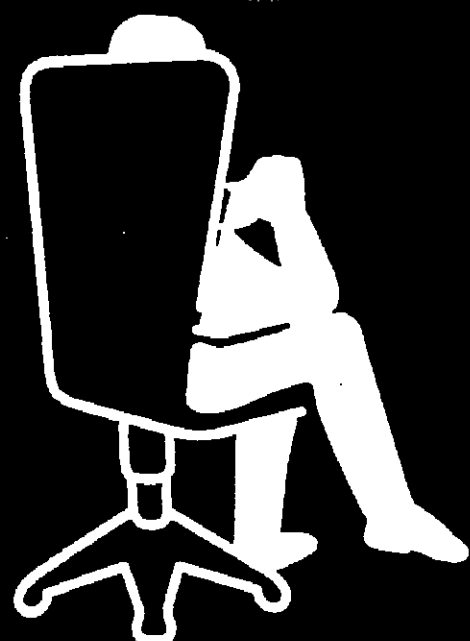
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Insurance deal starts a wave of speculation frenzy

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

THE STOCK market went big crazy. The long awaited insurance deal inspired another wave of frenzied speculative action among financial shares, helping Footsie to score a 94.1 points gain to 5,745.1, just 6.5 from its peak.

As the shares of Commercial Union and General Accident, merging to create the country's biggest insurer, fell back, GRE and Norwich Union led others higher as the market sought to spotlight the next deal.

GRE, helped by better-than-expected figures and a £189m handout to shareholders, rose 34.5p to 475p. At one time it was CU's expected partner. Norwich climbed 21.75p to 496p. The shares were, shortly after last summer's flotation, trading at 31p.

Royal & Sun Alliance gained 27p to 778p and Prudential Corporation, again with the help of figures, ended 40p up at 934p. Underlining that it is often better to travel

than arrive GA fell 85p to 1,370p and CU 35p to 1,095p.

On the banking pitch Standard Chartered started yet again. The shares surged 124p to 882p on a surprisingly soothing trading statement which tended to highlight the bank's attractions, both on trading and takeover considerations.

Last month Standard's shares were bumping along at 543p. They have since risen on bid speculation as well as recovery hopes. At 543p the group looked a sitting duck; it is unlikely the more exotic price will frighten off a bidder.

Lloyds TSB gained 32p to 934p and Barclays 36p to 1,897p. Abbey National put on 33p to 1,320p. Year's figures are due today and in the present highly fired mood it would surprise few if the former building society also produced corporate activity.

Halifax, up 3p at 924p, could also be gearing up for action with its results next week.

Schroders, still family controlled, was by current standards quite subdued, up 9p at 2,142p. Whispers point to a bid from Morgan Stanley, the US group.

The two bickering drug giants staged a modest recovery with suggestions in the air that Glaxo Wellcome could mount a hostile bid for SmithKline Beecham. Glaxo gained 81p to 1,738p and SB 42p to 766p. Nycomed and Zeneca, regarded as bid fodder in the present climate, gained 110p to 2,310p and 42p to 2,642p respectively.

Telecoms, another area where there is a huge expectation that corporate action will unfold, were active. Colt climbed 80p to ring a new 1,150p peak. BT, up 4p to 602p, and Vodafone, 7p higher to 539p, were others attracting attention.

Engineer GKN, where bid hopes have appeared recently, added 40p to 1,496p and whistled old faithful Allied

Domecq frothed 22p higher to 570p. Others caught up in the corporate speculation included Signet, up 0.75p at 36.75p.

Besides merger mania Footsie was spurred by a strong New York opening and the continuing recovery in Asian markets. Supporting indices stretched to new highs.

Elsewhere Courtaulds, the chemical group, gained 59.5p

to 331p on its reshaping which, it is felt, will make it more vulnerable to a bid. Logica, the computer group, jumped 132.5p to 1,365p following results, encouraging other IT shares.

Utilities remained subdued on regulatory fears. Anglian Water sunk 26p to 792p and Hyder 6.5p to 907.5p. Southern Electric, with the added disadvantage of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell caution, fell 40p to 510p.

Bass added 21p to 1,012p. Merrill Lynch upgraded the shares to "accumulate" following the £1.8bn Inter-Continental Hotels & Resorts acquisition.

A profit warning from HP Bulmer, the cider maker, soured the shares 96p to 310p and a half year loss at Acas & Hatcheson, the edible oil group, left the price 36.5p down at 225p. An apparent £900,000 loss at an offshoot lowered electronics group Radamec 27p to 57p.

Photobition, the printing services group, formed to 303.5p ahead of an investment dinner at London's Savoy Hotel, hosted by stockbroker Henderson Crosswaite.

Scottia, the drugs group, raising £50m through a convertible issue, was firm at 325p; Seta Healthcare, paying SmithKline £4.75m for a hangover cure called Resolve, held at 553.5p.

Faber Prest, a distributor, jumped 90p to 455p. Bid talks, seemingly with the management, are near completion. A 500p offer is expected.

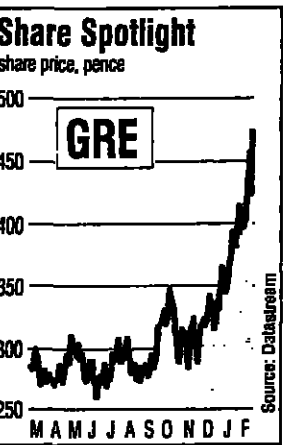
Dawson, the newspaper distributor, gave up 16p to 155p, prompting the company to express annoyance a market maker had cut the share price to generate business.

House builders put on a good showing following the George Wimpey results. Wimpey rose 5p to 1,222p. NatWest Securities expect profits of £80m this year and £90m next.

TAKING STOCK

Greenwich Resources rose 2.25p to 21.5p after chairman Colin Phipps described its 20 per cent interest in Desire Petroleum as a "significant asset". Westmont, also with 20 per cent, gained 13p to 166.5p. Next month SG Securities intend to place shares in Desire which has the largest acreage off the Falkland Islands. Its offshore portfolio is equivalent to 30 North Sea blocks. Wells have yet to be drilled. The first of five is due in April or May. SG calculates a core value of £45m for Desire.

Tricorder Technology, traded on Oxfex, has attracted the support of the 31 investment group. It has a 13.98 per cent stake following a £1.75m cash raising exercise. Amadeus Capital, which numbers Microsoft among its backers, has 4.19 per cent. Shares of the 3-D scanner developer were sold at 47p; they are now 42.5p.



Alcohol Beverages

Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	PE	Code
100 480 All Saints	20.00	+0.25	1.1	10.0	100
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Threats alone are unlikely to improve the attitude of players

THIS IS the time of the year when football managers find it beneficial to suggest that some men in their charge should be thinking seriously about alternative employment.

The old retain-and-transfer and annual contracts enabled managers to employ fear as a factor in motivation because many players lived with the threat of being dumped when the season was over.

It was a rotten system (ruled illegal in 1961), one that the players had every right to challenge with all the media and political support their union could muster.

The pendulum has since swung so far in the direction of even just half-decent players that threats

alone are unlikely to improve their attitude. We are presently hearing and reading about the Aston Villa manager, Brian Little, who resigned on Tuesday after a brief encounter with the club's chairman, Doug Ellis.

Little is not the bullying kind, but it was a big mistake to suppose that his most difficult players would respond to decent behaviour and perform for him accordingly.

If one player more than any other brought Little down, it was Stan Collymore, whose £7m transfer from Liverpool last summer caused people to wonder about Little's judgement.

Collymore's pathetic grumbling, his attempt to put the arm on

Nottingham Forest after moving to Anfield, and then his refusal to take up residence on Merseyside suggested that Little was buying trouble.

A few weeks ago Collymore turned out for Villa in the FA Cup at Portsmouth. Said to be feeling unwell, he was substituted shortly after half-time.

An old pro said in reference to Little's method of dealing with Collymore: "A cuddle? What he needs is a kick up the arse."

Plenty of managers would have resorted to that remedy, but they all worked in a much different time. "Today you have to be more subtle, cunning and tricky," a Premiership manager said this week.



KEN JONES

"Talent is so thin on the ground that good players won't stand for you getting into their faces. Now we're stuck with the Bosman thing. If things aren't working out to their satisfaction, they're off."

Brian Clough's success in football management was attributed in

part to his understanding that very few players could be relied upon to always put in maximum effort. He played all the angles before they played him, keeping his players in a state of nervousness.

I don't know how much reading Clough does but there is a passage in Robert Graves's *I, Claudius* that is appropriate to the style he employed in management. The gladiators are assembled for a pep talk by Livia, the wife of Augustus and as wily as any football manager could be.

She spent a great deal on the Games, and at this point in the story she feels she is not getting value for money. At the end of her firm lecture, she says: "These

Games are being degraded by more and more professional tricks to stay alive. I won't have it. So put on a good show, and there'll be plenty of money for the living, and a decent burial for the dead. If you let me down, I'll break this guild, and I'll send the lot of you to the mines... That's all I've got to say to you."

Alan Brown, who managed Burnley, Sunderland and Sheffield Wednesday, never let his players forget who was boss, no matter what their distinction. "If I give them enough rope, they're sure to hang me," I remember him saying.

There is something of the great Celtic manager Jock Stein in Alex Ferguson. Taking a leaf from Stein's

hard book, Ferguson does not permit liberties. One of Ferguson's advantages is that he was involved in the development of players who remain wary of him.

A big problem for managers today is that players who have risen up to earn prodigious salaries are admiringly interviewed by sycophants in the employ of television and popular newspapers, receiving the same attention as rock stars.

One of John Gregory's first tasks as the new manager of Aston Villa will be to persuade Steve Staunton and Gareth Southgate that it makes sense to stay put. Another will be to seek a means of motivating Collymore. But that is another story...

The indomitable Stewart remains master of his craft

AS ONE of the few England players without his own newspaper column, Alec Stewart gives the impression of a nearly man. It is, as his brilliant batting is once again proving, something of a false image, and yet it is one that cannot help being recalled again this Friday when Michael Atherton notches his 50th Test as captain.

This is a milestone that, ironically, Stewart himself could well have been celebrating had the England captaincy, following Graham Gooch's resignation four and a half years ago, remained with the yeomanry, instead of falling into Oxbridge hands.

For Stewart, 35 at the end of the tour, such conjecture and speculation are as pointless as patting back a juicy half-volley and then moaning about the missed opportunity. Even so, as Atherton's long-term opening partner, he is perhaps well placed to have noticed how the half-century, unique to English cricket at least, has been constructed.

"Atherton has improved tactically and he handles tough situations much better than he did when he first started. I'd say it's only his handling of individuals, which he does in his own way, which is still a bit unusual. It agrees with some players, but not with others, and it's more a case of them having to get used to him than the other way round."

But if their viewpoints do not always meet on common ground, Stewart is a loyal admirer, and one of those who phoned Atherton at the 11th hour to try and talk him out of resigning the captaincy - a play which eventually succeeded.

"I simply said: if you're quitting because you feel it's affecting your batting, fair enough. But if it was for the wrong reasons, like media pressure, then he should carry on as we probably had our best chance ever of beating the West Indies. I told him, after all he'd been through, he deserved to be captain of what could be a successful England side."

They have a chance, too, and one that, with the series level at one Test apiece, is so far being sustained by Stewart's bat and

England's senior batsman is not ready to relinquish his role at the top of the order. He talked to Derek Pringle

Angus Fraser's unstinting efforts with the ball.

With 259 runs in two Tests and a farce, all on fairly spiteful pitches, Stewart is way ahead of the chasing pack. Mind you, it is not the first time he has done well in the Caribbean and, since the Packer era began in 1977 - a time when the West Indies pace bowling juggernaut had just begun to roll into action - no visiting player has scored more runs.

"I'm generally a fluent timer of the ball, but I'd rate my 83 in the last innings of the second match in Trinidad, which took nearly five hours, as one of the best I've ever played. Batting against this lot is always a challenge but in those conditions I had to work much harder, and from a defensive and concentration point of view, it's as well as I've played."

A hard-working cricketer, he analyses his game closely, usually after consultation with his father, Mickey, who was England coach from 1986-1992, and is a man who knows his son's game blindfold.

"With the pitches so far having a tendency to keep low as well as move about, I've deliberately stayed leg side of the ball," Stewart said. "Normally I go back and across to off stump, but if you do that and the ball squats, chances are you're going to play across it and be slow. By staying fractionally out of line, and keeping my pads out of the way, I hope to get a bat on it instead."

"Mind you, Dad phoned me two days ago to remind me to go back to my old ways when I get on truer pitches, which with a bit of luck will happen in this Test, which is normally a good surface."

In fact, the pitch at the Bourda ground in Georgetown is fairly bare, and may suit spin. It is a suspicion even entertained by the West Indies selectors, who have picked a specialist wrist spinner, Dinanath Ramnarine - a selection that may persuade England to play both

of their slow bowlers in the fourth Test.

As far as England are concerned, the problems over accommodating an extra spinner are well known. In the past, it has mainly been the wicket-keeper who has made way, with Stewart having to soak up the extra responsibility of taking the gloves. But while he is again willing to do whatever is asked of him, England appear to be intent on resolving the dilemma by other means.

"I enjoy keeping and I'll do it if asked. But you also have to ask what is best for the team and I think a major strength of this team is an Atherton/Stewart opening partnership. If I had to keep, I couldn't open as well and I can't see us going that route with three Tests still left to play."

As a batsman recently on the sharp end of Ambrose and Walsh, he scoffs at the recent notion that they are over the hill.

"Whatever happened in Pakistan happened. As far as I'm concerned Ambie [Ambrose] has bowled as well as I can remember. OK, the pitches and the large seams on the balls have undoubtedly been a factor, but he just doesn't bowl a bad ball. He makes it look so simple too. He just runs in straight, his arm comes over straight, he follows through straight and the ball goes straight. Which is what Gussie [Fraser] does for us, at a slightly reduced pace."

"During the two Tests in Trinidad, the only boundary I can remember scoring off Ambrose was a thick edge to third man. Courtney is similar, though he might give you a few more balls to score off. Against bowlers like that you have to limit your ambition. I'm reading Steve Waugh's diary of their tour here three years ago and he's right when he says you can't look further ahead than the next ball. You simply can't set scoring targets like you might against other teams."

As a touchstone, and simply as a reminder that it can be



Alec Stewart in action during the second Test against the West Indies in Trinidad. "Batting against this lot is always a challenge. I've had to work much harder from a defensive point of view"

done, he carries a video of his back-to-back hundreds, made in Barbados four years ago, around with him.

"I'm a great believer in watching videos of yourself, and it's good to compare how I'm batting now with those knockouts then, which I consider to be two of my best ever."

But if Barbados holds special cricketing memories, it is also the place where wives and significant others descend, and Stewart is looking forward to seeing his family, a visit that was banned last winter in Zimbabwe. "Last winter's decision to ban wives and girlfriends was wrong. As long as they realise that we are working and that they are only here because we're working, that's fine. I'm

lucky, my wife Lynne knows where she stands when the cricket's on. But as long as they are well organised, which they weren't in Cape Town two winters ago, it shouldn't be a problem. After all, as we proved in Zimbabwe, we can lose without them being there as well."

With two young children growing up rapidly, many players find it increasingly difficult to drag themselves away on tour. It is a difficult situation, though one that Stewart - despite the absence of his own father, away touring with England during the 1960s - does not envisage changing just yet.

"While the family comes first, it's a career and one that has looked after me well. Providing fitness and form are not

compromised, I want to play as long as possible. One of the greatest influences on my cricket has been Graham Gooch, who had his best years between the ages of 34 and 39. As Linford Christie once said: 'Age is just a number.' Well, I'm 35 in April and, as long as I keep enjoying it, I want to keep going."

A meticulous player before batting, he goes through the same habits of preparation: the twirling bat, the little scrape of the crease, as well as the little kick of dust as he wanders to square leg to compose himself. All have helped him add up to the formidable batsman he is today.

When I tell him that Ladbroke's have him to make 450-465 runs in the series, he feigns

mock surprise, saying he'll be happy to settle for that. When I tell him it's a good deal higher than the spread offered on Brian Lara he laughs the laugh of a man at ease with himself. "It just shows you, they know nothing about the game," he said.

● The West Indian vice-captain, Carl Hooper, has been reported to the West Indies Cricket Board and could face disciplinary action for deciding not to play for Guyana against England last weekend. The West Indies coach, Malcolm Marshall, and the chairman of selectors, Les Hall, had instructed all their Test batsmen to play if possible between the third and fourth Tests, but Hooper ignored their advice.

Bath at loose end after Lyle injury

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

GOOD back rows tend to stick together, but Bath's all-international loose trio have taken their inseparability to ludicrous extremes. With Richard Webster and Nathan Thomas, the Welsh flankers, already recovering from surgery on injured knees, the third member of the European champions' imported triumvirate, Dan Lyle, came out in sympathy yesterday by ruling himself out of all rugby for the rest of the season.

The uniquely athletic No 8 from the United States twisted a knee during last weekend's Allied Dunbar Premiership victory over Wasps and specialists have now diagnosed a rupture of the anterior cruciate ligament. The damage is so extensive that Lyle has been advised to catch the first flight back across the Atlantic and rest up for a minimum of three months.

Given that Webster is still convalescing after keyhole surgery and Thomas has only just had the plaster removed following his own knee operation, Lyle's seasonal demise leaves the selectors in serious difficulties. They must now be wishing they had kept Steve Ojomoh, who played for England in all three back-row positions, at the Rec instead of letting him slip away to Gloucester before Christmas.

Bath, who still consider themselves realistic contenders for the Premiership title, can call on the experience of Eric Peters, the former Scotland No 8, to help them out of their current hole. They are chronically short of flankers, however. Russell Earnshaw will fill one berth against Harlequins this weekend, with either Benoit Durand, a rookie signing from France, or Richard Bryan, a local product from Colston's School, playing the blind-side role.

Neath, meanwhile, are having all manner of fun with one of their own loose forwards, the Fijian international Tomasi Taniavili. A 31-year-old No 8, Taniavili is claiming unfair dismissal against the Welsh premiership side and has taken them to an industrial tribunal in Cardiff.

Signed by Neath on a two-year contract last July, Taniavili was labelled surplus to requirements after only two months. The player is challenging Neath's claim that an eight-week trial period was built into the deal. The hearing continues.

Ballesteros takes back seat

Golf

Andy Farrell reports from Dubai

THESE days Seve Ballesteros's seasonal debuts are low-key affairs. No place for him in the Dubai Classic's pre-tournament junket, while it is Greg Norman and Colin Montgomerie who have been given the plum assignments of designing the two courses at the new £160m Emirates Hills complex nearby.

It will not be Ballesteros's problem how to create an elevation worthy of the name hill out of the flat desert, and nor is the Spaniard that bothered. "Take the loss of his club contract. It gives me more freedom, more spare time," he said.

Ballesteros also has a new caddie, is searching for a new manager but has not employed a new coach - instructor Den-

nis Sheehy is just a good friend helping out. The victorious Ryder Cup captain has just one aim for the season, staying on the fairway, both on and off the course.

Last season the 40-year-old was never far from trouble, either while playing the game - he finished 136th in Europe - or in his other duties. "I knew the captaincy was going to be difficult, but it was worth it," Ballesteros said. "I didn't regret being captain. It was a great honour and a great thing to happen to me because it was in Spain and we won."

For those expecting a "but", it duly came. "I don't think I will ever be captain again. The more I think about it, the less possibilities I give myself."

And as for his successor, Ballesteros was not going to be trapped into saying anything. "It is up to the committee and they

know very well what to do. I have to be very polite this year. I promise you I will not be in the middle of any trouble. That is my goal for 1998. Great, whatever they decide is fantastic."

In order to look on the bright side of life, Ballesteros, who underwent a minor eye operation last month, is having to dig deep, as when his suitcase was broken into en route from Spain. "They took 12 shirts, five trousers and six sets of underwear, but they left me some things so they must be a good person, no?"

"I'm sure he is happy now wherever he is, and it is always nice to make people happy. I have always tried to look on the positive side. I have always been positive and a winner. I'm not a loser. There are winning people and losing people, I'm on the winning side and I'll always be there. Never forget that."

Warrington signings to miss cup showdown with Saints

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

WARRINGTON will be without two of their new signings for their Silk Cut Challenge Cup tie at St Helens on Sunday.

Adam Fogarty misses the chance to play against his former club after breaking down again in training with a thigh injury, while the ex-Oldham centre, Vince Fawcett, has been ill all week and also misses the match.

Castleford are hoping for their first five-figure crowd since the visit of the Australians in 1994 for the tie against the Bradford Bulls the previous day. The club have already sold more than 7,000 tickets and Wheldon Road's capacity of 11,750 could be tested.

Stuart Raper, the Cas coach, is confident that both Danny Orr and Barrie-Jon Mather, injured in the victory at Leeds in the previous round, will be fit to play.

Wigan are paying their opponents, Dewsbury, the compliment of fielding the strongest available line-up on Sunday. With the scrum-half Tony Smith back after injury, the Warriors have nine internationals in their starting line-up.

He replaces Craig Murdoch in the only change from the side which demolished Keighley in the last round.

The Australian forward Tony Mestrov, who missed the Keighley game with a dislocated finger, is on the substitutes' bench. Two other internationals - Denis Betts and Nigel Wright - are still recovering from injury.

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AROUND THE RESORTS

Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Low	Up	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Angou	Fresh snow conditions	100%	232	80	130	Part cloudy
AUSTRIA						
St Anton	Fresh dry snow at altitude	100%	232	30	230	Sunny spells
BULGARIA						
Borovets	Snow only on upper slopes	50%	52	0-20	50	Sunny
CANADA						
Whistler	Snowed and packed snow	100%	232	30	250	Part cloudy
FRANCE						
Courchevel	Fresh snow at all levels	100%	232	60	160	Bright/cold
ITALY						
Stresa D'Ossola	Generous snow cover	100%	232	40	110	Bright
NORWAY						
Gro	Hand-packed snow	80%	162	60	60	Part cloudy
SPAIN						
Val de Navarre	Springlike snow conditions	95%	82	30	90	Cloudy/sunny
SWITZERLAND						
Verbier	Much fun and best	40%	232	25	120	Sunny/cloud
UNITED STATES						
Snowbird	Fresh powder snow	100%	242	25	245	Fair/cold

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline

Football
THE TIMES FA YOUTH CUP Fourth-round replay: Ipswich v Hull (70).
FA YOUTH CUP COLLABORATION First Division: Luton v Fulham; Park Rangers v Wolves; Luton v Hull (70).
FRIENDLY MATCHES: Blyth Spartans v Middlesbrough (A) (70). Grays Rovers v Manchester United (70).
Ice hockey
EXPRESS CUP Final: San Siro Eagles v Grays Rovers (A) (Hewesite Arena)
Other sports
BOWLING: English Women's Indoor National Championships, Bromley.
SKOOKIE: Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (Derby).
SQUASH: Super Series, first (Hertford).
TENNIS: Guardsen Direct Cup (Barnet Park).

Venables the target of Goldberg's £30m Palace revolution

Football

ON WHAT was a remarkable day by any standards, let alone one that ended with an important FA Cup replay, Mark Goldberg yesterday concluded his £30m takeover at Crystal Palace. The deal will lead to the replacement of Steve Coppell as the Palace manager, possibly by Terry Venables, to Juventus becoming the first Italian club to have a stake in a Premiership side, and - eventually - to the end of Ron Noades' 17-year reign at Selhurst Park.

For good measure Goldberg also authorised the signing of his first player, with Aston Villa's Sass Curcio joining Palace for £1m.

Goldberg, a 34-year-old Kent-based computer millionaire, finalised the takeover with Noades, the Palace chairman, in the morning. However, he will not officially take over until October, when his buy-out is technically completed. In the meantime Noades will continue as chairman, although he will have to agree major decisions such as signings in advance with his successor.

Goldberg later saw Coppell, who agreed to become Palace's new "development director of football", at a lunchtime meeting. Goldberg confirmed that he is hoping to recruit Venables, the former England coach, to become the club's new manager with talks between the two likely in the next week. Coppell will continue as manager until his replacement is found.

Juventus are taking up a 10 per cent stake in Palace, and are also providing technical expertise. Coppell has been charged with the responsibility of help-

ing to link up with the Serie A side. "Steve will help implement the Juventus model at Crystal Palace and will travel around the world looking at different training techniques," Goldberg said.

"He will also be involved in implementing the new management infrastructure that we are looking to put into the club. Steve is important to me in terms of my future plans but we will be looking to replace him as manager shortly."

Once he has been replaced as manager, Coppell will work alongside a Juventus executive, based full-time at Selhurst

Park, while Roberto Bettiga, the Juventus vice president, is to be invited to become an executive director at Palace. The south London side could also sign Italian players on loan from Juve.

Goldberg explained: "Juventus will be technical directors for football. They have a formula which has been proven over many years to optimise the experience and expertise of the playing staff."

Goldberg has a grandiose five-year plan for Palace and envisages the club having become a force in Europe, playing in a

redeveloped 40,000-capacity stadium at Selhurst Park and having transformed their training, management and medical facilities by that time.

Venables, who managed Palace from 1976 to 1980 before leaving for Queen's Park Rangers, is in Malaysia with the Australian national team and is not due to return to Britain until next Monday, yet is believed to be prepared to listen to offers from any Premiership club. Whether he will accept one from Palace remains to be seen.

Goldberg has put down a de-

posit of £10m with the remaining £20m paid upon completion in October to secure 85 per cent of the club's shares, will invest at least £5m on new players over the next 18 months, as well as a similar amount on stadium redevelopment plans.

Despite Palace being in 19th place in the Premiership, Goldberg's declared aim is to establish them among the elite as they contemplate their third relegation in five years.

"I have a five-year plan to make Palace a club that can compete in Europe. Financially, I have allowed for the

possibility that we could be in the First Division for two of those five years but I can't accept that we will not be able to turn around our fortunes this season and stay up," he explained.

Amid all the bombast, one dissenting was that of Laurie Dahl, editor of the Palace fanzine *Echo*, who warned: "I wouldn't like Venables back at the club, being one of those that remember the rape of the club that occurred when he left. He took half the team off to QPR, and it took us years to recover from that."

Villa quick to put Gregory in command

By Mark Burton

JOHN GREGORY is the new manager of Aston Villa, who wasted no time in filling the job vacated by Brian Little on Tuesday afternoon. Little barely had time to offer some explanation of his departure at his own press conference yesterday afternoon before Gregory moved into his old office.

It was an environment Gregory was not unfamiliar with, having only a year ago resigned from Little's back-room staff and dropped to the Second Division to take over as manager of Wycombe Wanderers.

Perhaps the increasing doubts over Little's future, which he admitted had played a part in his decision to go, had prompted Villa to give some thought to a successor. Certainly the move for Gregory was quick, as the new manager explained on ClubCall. "I knew at 6 pm yesterday that I had the chance to do the job. We concluded things at about 3 pm today," he said.

His appointment came as a surprise, particularly to the local evening paper, which yesterday offered readers the chance to nominate their choice from a list of a dozen possible new managers. Gregory was not on it.

The man himself said his new status had taken a while to sink in. Gregory said: "This has been a traumatic time for the club. The team had an awful

start to the season and it has escalated. One defeat sent alarm bells ringing."

He said the most important thing was to pick up three points from the match at Liverpool on Saturday. Delighted with the opportunity to be involved in the UEFA Cup quarter-final against Atletico Madrid, he acknowledged that his prime task of keeping Villa in the Premiership would be hard work.

"I know it is a tough job but I think 42 or 43 points might be enough for safety."

"Certainly a few days ago, when I was at Wycombe, I wasn't thinking about this job. I think this job has come at the right time. It is also the right time for me to come back to Villa Park. I am going to grasp the opportunity with both hands. It is a huge club and I have been part of it in recent times."

Little's recent times at Villa Park have been filled with intrigue, from what he told the press at Villa's Bodmoor Heath training ground yesterday after saying goodbye to the players. He claimed that there were "certain things going on behind the scenes which were affecting my managerial position".

He refused to elaborate, but even Gregory felt obliged to distance himself from any involvement in Little's departure, saying: "There has been a bit of muck-throwing in the last week or so - not of my doing."

Little hoped that his decision to leave after three and a half years would ease the growing pressure on the team. Explaining that his resignation after a meeting with the chairman, Doug Ellis, had resulted from "deep and careful consideration" of his position, he said: "I feel my decision was reached for the best interests of Aston Villa, especially in the short term. Over the past few weeks there has been growing speculation about my position at the football club and I genuinely felt that was affecting the performance of the players."

"There were certain things going on behind the scenes which were affecting my managerial position. As a result my decision to resign was not taken lightly - and most definitely not on the spur of the moment. I sincerely hope that my resignation will help ease the pressure the team may have been under."

His assistant manager, Allan Evans, who was on his way back from Madrid yesterday after watching Atletico, said: "When I got back I immediately phoned Brian and spent three hours with him. It wasn't a case of me trying to persuade him to change his mind because he is his own man. Things had gone too far down the line."

Ellis, and Villa's fans, will hope the same is not the case for the team and its slide towards the relegation zone.



South Africa's Benedict McCarthy (right) shoots goalwards in his team's 2-1 defeat of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the semi-final of the African Nations' Cup in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, yesterday. McCarthy, who plays for Ajax, scored both goals, the second in extra time. Photograph: AFP

Durie on the mend after clash of heads

By Ken Gaunt

The Rangers striker Gordon Durie is expected to be released from hospital today after being carried unconscious from a Scottish Premier Division match.

Durie collapsed on Tuesday night at Rugby Park during the 1-1 draw against Kilmarnock and there were concerns about his health.

Minutes earlier Durie had been involved in an accidental clash of heads with Kilmarnock's Gary Holt on the edge of the Rangers penalty area. He was taken to Glasgow's Southern General Hospital where he regained consciousness after 20 minutes.

Durie awoke yesterday with a thumping headache and refused breakfast but was well enough to receive visitors, among them was the Rangers manager, Walter Smith, and club captain, Richard Gough.

The secretary of the Scottish Players' Union, Tony Higgins, was among those who sent his best wishes to the Scotland player, but he fears that players outside the Scottish Premier Division may not receive proper medical care if they are injured in matches.

Higgins said: "We argued the case that if there is a head injury during a match, then the referee must stop the game, even if it means denying a team an advantage."

"That was what happened last night, although it was a strange one with Gordon at

first seeming to be OK, then blacking out. Bobby Williamson [Kilmarnock's manager] said that if a player needed treatment after a head wound then perhaps he should stay off the pitch."

"I see his point but I think it would be difficult to impose some kind of a blanket ban on players reappearing. What is essential is that a club doctor is in attendance and that is usually the case especially in Premier Division matches."

"At least in the top division clubs are quite well covered for medical staff but further down the leagues that does not always apply."

"It is a worry that there might not be appropriate medical back-up at some clubs basically because of a lack of funding."

"But we would like to see a club doctor in attendance at every match throughout the league, preferably with a knowledge of head injuries."

John Robertson, Hearts' veteran striker, is joining Dundee on a month's loan but insists the decision was made for him.

The former Scotland international has revealed that the Tynecastle management informed him last night he will team up with the Scottish First Division leaders.

"I'm disappointed Jim Jeffries and Billy Brown don't see me involved in the next four or five games as they are important for Hearts," he said. "But they have said I can return to be part of the run-in. My heart is at

Tynecastle and always will be.

"However I'm a Dundee player for the next month and I guarantee they will get 110 per cent from me."

Robertson has scored 270 goals in his two spells with Hearts, but the arrival of Frenchman Stéphane Adam has restricted him to eight starts this term.

Finn Harri Kampman yesterday took over as coach at Motherwell and insisted it already felt like a second home.

Kampman, 43, has joined the Scottish Premier Division strugglers from Lahti on a two-and-a-half-year contract. He made his name as a coach with MyPa 47 whose UEFA Cup victory over Motherwell in 1995 left a firm impression on the Fir Park board.

Kampman succeeds Alex McLeish who earlier this month left the club to take charge of Hibernian, the only team below Motherwell in the top flight.

"I like the fact that this is such a family club it appears very homely and yet at the same time very ambitious," Kampman said.

"With the new Scottish Premiership next season I know it is vital we are not relegated and staying up is my minimum target."

"I believe I'm moving to one of the best leagues in Europe and I was both surprised and proud to be given the challenge I have here."

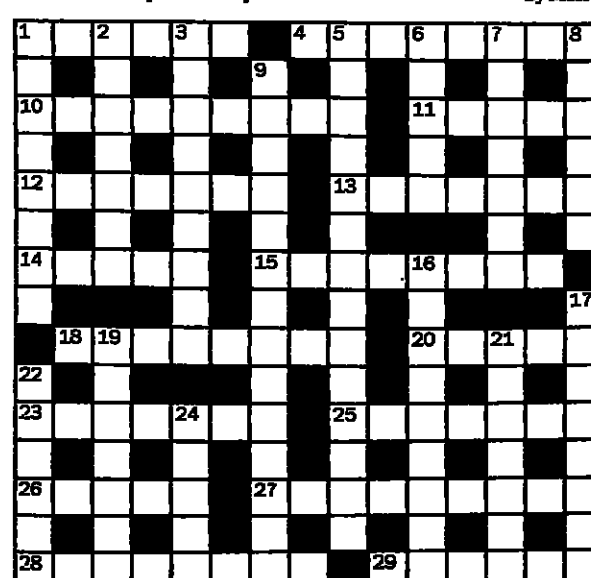
Kampman's deputy, Jim Griffin, retained temporary charge for last night's home match with St Johnstone.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3544, Thursday 26 February

By Mass

Wednesday's solution



WINDOWLESS SPUD
T A F A E D I
O R H O M O S O U E Q U E
K K I S S B E L T C
P A S S I O N A T E
R E S H A R P E N K E Y E D
E V I N G C A M I
C R I E D T H E N C H A N T
U G G I N G C H I N
C O M P E N S A T I O N
I A N S O U D I
O A N S O I L I A N K E R S
U I U A T I V E L
S A C K S M A L L S C A L E

- ACROSS**
- 1 Deadly obstacle facing Henry (6)
4 Animal secured, we hear, to provide seeing ultimately (5,3)
10 Record returns: puts away round millions - from these? (4,5)
11 Compose a setting (5)
12 Tinker dwell poorly around Idaho (7)
13 Cause of hill fissure? (7)
14 Relief, getting liberal support (5)
15 Drinks served around ship on river for tipplers (8)
18 Disease of curs spread to US city (8)
20 Brush with firm (taking

- time out) (5)
23 Unconsidered point (7)
25 Spear fish in river (7)
26 Hint, nothing forbidding (5)
27 Advocate return of Knight in exchange (9)
28 Crook's bad, one concludes (8)
29 Home by river? Dead right (6)
DOWN
1 Gift recipients take in deposits (8)
2 Squares accounts (7)
3 Animal's not quite fleet, ailing and old (9)
5 Rank stain in US plant that's deficient (14)
6 Put off fellow cutting mounding grass (5)

- 7 Straight (a left, not right) from Geordie (7)
8 Audibly gnash second course (6)
9 Build, intersect in form of network made to last (14)
16 Horseman from Italy carried by upright animal (9)
17 Speculated, as revealed, around City (8)
19 Lots of money gent laid aside (4,3)
21 Clean round note, say (7)
22 Escort's with love in carriage, look (6)
24 Expert lining a new garment (5)

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